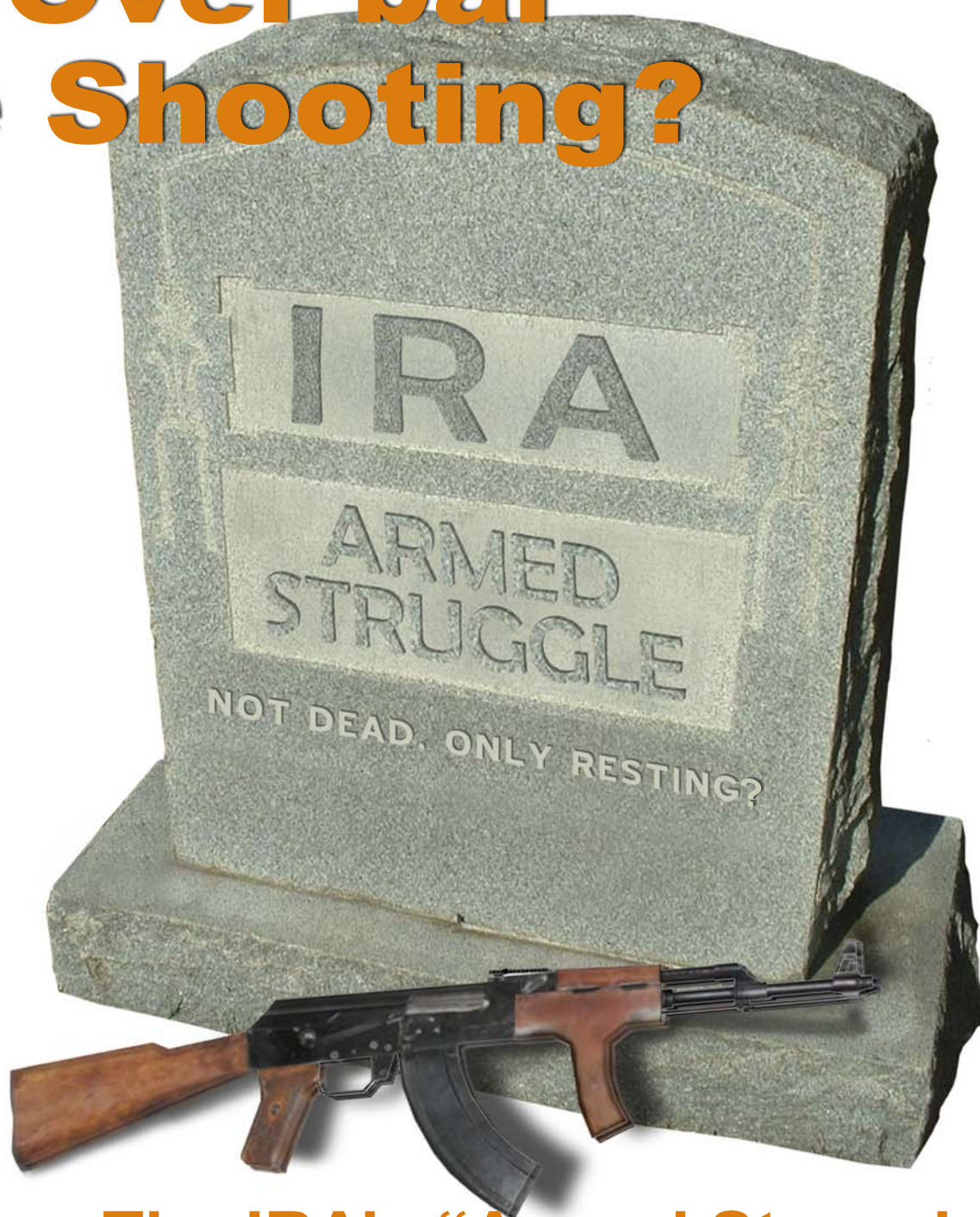


Socialist Standard

Olympics PLC
IRA's Armed Struggle
Religion and the State
Japan Atom Bombings
Zapatistas
Marx and Philosophy

September 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1213 £1

All Over bar the Shooting?



The IRA's "Armed Struggle"



Hiroshima after the blast, page 10



Zapata, page 12



Marx: Radio 4's favourite philosopher page 14

Subscription Orders
should be sent to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Rates
One year subscription (normal rate) **£12**
One year subscription (low/unwaged) **£7**
Europe rate **£15** (Air mail)
Rest of world **£22** (Air mail)
Voluntary supporters subscription **£20** or more.
Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Saturday 3 September at the address below.

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notice should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

tel:
020 7622 3811
e-mail:
spgb@worldsocialism.org

September 2005

socialist standard

website: www.worldsocialism.org

contents

FEATURES

IRA: Is it Really the End of the "Armed Struggle"? 6

Is the IRA hanging up its balaclavas for good or simply mothballing them? And what has the working class to gain from this?

Religion and the Limits of the State 8

The capitalist state controls the economy, the workers and the ideology of the market. But it can't control religious mania.

Why They Dropped the Bombs 10

Arguably two of the greatest war crimes were the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. But did they really help end the war?

Are We All Zapatistas? 12

Freedom fighters or coffee manufacturers? Piers Hobson looks at the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, better known as the Zapatistas.

Marx and Philosophy 14

What did Marx have to say about philosophy? Was he a philosopher at all? Adam Buick examines Marx's philosophical stance.

REGULARS

EDITORIAL	3	REVIEWS	16
CONTACT DETAILS	3	50 YEARS AGO	18
PATHFINDERS	4	MEETINGS	18
LETTERS	5	GREASY POLE	19
COOKING THE BOOKS 1	9	VOICE FROM THE BACK	20
COOKING THE BOOKS 2	15	FREE LUNCH	20

"It is always the working class that make up the pawns in armies, legal and illegal, and the end of a war never brings them victory"

IRA: Is it Really the End of the "Armed Struggle"?, page 6

Religion and Terrorism

Socialists are always cautious about the term 'morality' because within class society it largely pertains to what the ruling class have established as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour or actions or activities which are regarded as 'good' or 'bad'.

Nevertheless it is easy for Socialists to empathise with the feeling of popular revulsion that followed the acts of mass murder in London on 7 July. As always when guns and bombs are used as political weapons, the victims of the bombings in London were innocent and without any influence over the agenda that motivated the murderers; they were simply people going to work.

The general feeling, from the government, the Queen, the churches, the media and the public at large is that it was an outrage; that slaughtering innocent people simply because you oppose the actions of those you perceive to be their leaders is a barbaric act that cannot be justified by the idealism, ideology or political or religious beliefs of those ordering or carrying out such an act.

To raise the question of the war in Iraq is in no way to imply sympathy with the terrorists but it is reasonable to look at Iraq and, indeed, the entire panoply of violence, armaments and warfare that latter-day capitalism generates.

The British Labour government largely in obedience to the dictates of the political kings of US capitalism - just like

those who ordered what is agreed were barbaric acts in London - did co-operate in the massive slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis who, rather than supporting Saddam Hussein were, according to the Anglo-American coalition, the real victims of the dreaded dictator. The result of both actions, though not the numbers of victims, was identical: innocent people who were wholly bereft of any power or influence to concede to the demands of those ordering the killings were wantonly slaughtered.

All forms of warfare - and terrorism is a form of warfare - present the threat of death to the participants whether they are professionals (people prepared to kill in circumstances determined by their employers) or serious amateurs (people prepared to kill for a specific cause). In either circumstance risk to life comes easier to those who believe that life on Earth is a mere prelude to a life hereafter. It is a notion that gives solace to believers; making them less anxious to question their role in a situation that defeats rational understanding. That is why governments promote irrational religious belief for their armed forces and why they provide facilities for religious rituals, make priests and parsons officers and pay their salaries.

For the terrorist the most pressing incentive is belief in the virtue of their cause. The man or woman facing the dreadful hazards associated with terrorism has to be morally reinforced with the idea

that their god is on their side. God as Allah, as the Great Jehovah, or whatever other identity he takes on in any of the myriad of religious beliefs, is always stern and demanding and his strictures are always accommodating to the belligerence engendered by the exclusivity of faith. God is indeed a vital weapon in the psychological make-up of the terrorist; a guarantee that sacrifice will be rewarded with eternal happiness.

A verse of an old Irish rebel song devoted to the IRA goes:

'Upon their shield, a stainless field,
the virtues blazoned bright,

'With temperance, and purity and
truth and honour dight;

'So now they stand at God's right
hand Who framed their dauntless way,

'Who taught them and Who brought
them the glory of the day!'

For someone not utterly drugged on the belief of the inseparability of god and cause, the idea of committing suicide in order to take the lives of other anonymous people is too utterly sick for contemplation. Allah, like the Christian God and his rivals, is a demanding and cruel god and without him and the imagined comfort of eternal salvation, it is hard to imagine the foul practice of suicide bombing or other sort of bombing existing.

Contact Details

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

Central London branch.

Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Ashwell Park, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5SG.

Tel: **01582 764929**

email: richardbotterill@hotmail.com.
2nd & 4th Mon. 7.30. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch)

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 7622 3811**

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ.

Tel: **020 7834 8186**

MIDLANDS

Birmingham branch. Thur. 8pm, The Square Peg, Corporation Street.
Tel: Ron Cook, **0121 533 1712**

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Corres: John Bissett, 10 Scarborough Parade, Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2AL.
Tel: **0191 422 6915** email: johnbissett@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. P. Shannon, 71 Coniston Road, Lancaster LA1 3NW.

email: lorna@kaibosh.freemove.co.uk
Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB.

Tel: **0161 860 7189**

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin.

01204 844589

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG
Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick.

01706 522365

Southeast Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Huddersfield. Richard Rainford, 28 Armitage Rd, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield, West Yorks, HD4 7DP
Hull. Keith Scholey. Tel: **01482 44651**
Skipton. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ.
Tel: **01756 752621**

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Bournemouth and East Dorset. Paul Hannam, 12 Kestrel Close, Upton, Poole BH16 5RP. Tel: **01202 632769**

Brighton. Corres: c/o 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Bristol. Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: **0117 9511199**

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: **01223 570292**

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB.
Tel: **01209 219293**

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast. R. Montague, 151 Cavehill Road, BT15 1BL. Tel: **02890 586799**

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. J. Moir. Tel: **0131 440 0995**

JIMMY @jmoir29.freemove.co.uk
Branch website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT.

Tel: **0141 5794109** Email:

richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire: D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: **01294 469994.** derricktrainer@freeuk.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX.
Tel: **01328 541643**

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW.

Tel: **01506 462359**

Email: matt@wsnweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: **01792 643624**

Cardiff and District. John James, 67 Romilly Park Road, Barry CF62 6RR.
Tel: **01446 405636**

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

AFRICA

Gambia. World of Free Access. c/o 21 Dobson St, Benjul.

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 56428, Nairobi

Uganda. Socialist Club, PO Box 217, Kabale. Email: wmugyenzi@yahoo.com

Swaziland. Mandia Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Spobjervej 173, DK-8220, Brabrand.

Germany. Norbert. Email:

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Tristan Miller. Email:

psychonaut@nothingisreal.com

Norway. Robert Stafford. Email:

hallblithe@yahoo.com

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia.. Email:

commonownership@yahoo.com.au

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti

Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280,

Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email:

SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand. Email:

wspnz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United

States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA

02144 USA. Email:

wspboston@mindspring.com

Socialist Robots...

In Rossum's *Universal Robots* (1921), the best workers are the cheapest ones with the fewest needs, who know only how to work, have no humanity, remember everything but think of nothing new. In fact, they are Robots, humanoids genetically engineered for a life of drudgery, as the Czech word 'robot' indicates. Although the concept of artificial humans goes back much further than Capak's play, it is since his work that ideas of mechanical men and women created to serve humanity have really taken off, and increasingly are no longer restricted to film, TV and literature.

Modern robots, however, have little in common with Capak's. Bolted to the floor, they are computer-controlled mechanical arms capable of such tasks as painting, welding, riveting, loading and stacking, and are seen in increasing numbers throughout the manufacturing industry. Whether they should be classed as robots is debatable, for they fail utterly to resemble what we commonly understand to be a robot; that is, a mechanical human.

Such robots have been in development for some time, particularly in Japan. ASIMO, for example, is Honda's 4-foot tall humanoid robot which can walk, run, climb stairs and respond to fifty different Japanese phrases. Sony's QRIO can connect wirelessly to the internet and get up should it fall. And Toyota's 'Partner' robot can inflate its mechanical lungs, purse its artificial lips and play the trumpet (*The Economist Technology Quarter*, March 12th 2005). But that's about all they can do, and as yet are a very long way from the C3POs, Datas, and Terminators of film and TV.

As we move toward socialism, and as technology advances, it is not unlikely that a sentient, humanoid robot capable of speech, thought, mobility, and invested with something

Asimo - just wants to be loved



of a personality (to ease communication with it and reinforce its 'humanoid' characteristics), will be created, should present trends continue. However, they could present

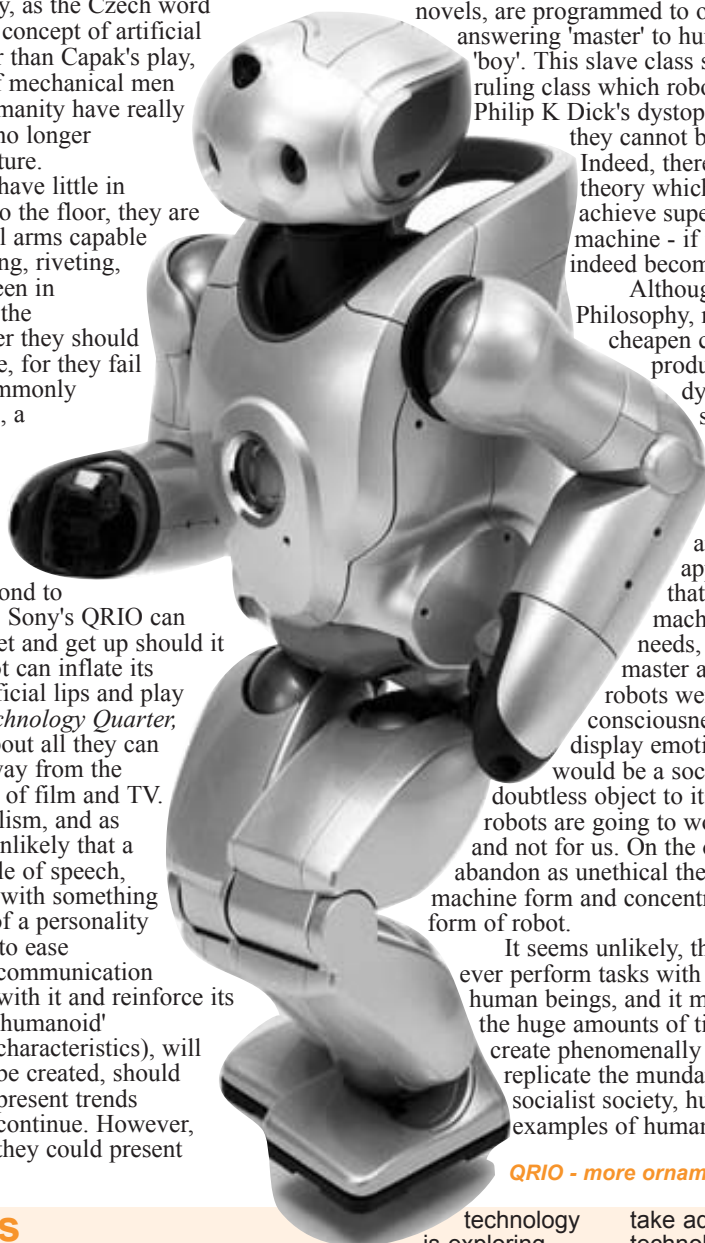
something of a problem for socialism, for in a society where all people are considered equal, what relationship will we have with artificial people? Will organic humans be more equal than inorganic ones?

Naturally, science-fiction has much to say on this subject. Isaac Asimov's robots, featured in many of his short stories and novels, are programmed to obediently serve humanity, even answering 'master' to humans, who often address them as 'boy'. This slave class stands in complete contrast to the ruling class which robots have evolved to become in Philip K Dick's dystopian futures, and are so lifelike that they cannot be distinguished from human beings. Indeed, there are certain strands of evolutionary theory which suggest that inorganic life will achieve superiority over organic life so that the machine - if machine is the right word - may indeed become the dominant life form.

Although Marx, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, noted that machinery 'is intended to cheapen commodities' and 'is a means for producing surplus value', the exploratory dynamic of science is not always suppressed by the confines and limitations of capitalism and humanoid robots may continue to be developed into socialism, even though they are hugely expensive and as yet have no practical applications. However, it's unlikely that socialists would want a servant, machine or otherwise, to see to their needs, for it would clearly necessitate a master and servant relationship. And if robots were programmed with a consciousness, as well as the capacity to display emotive behaviour, we can assume it would be a socialist consciousness and would doubtless object to its servitude. If sentient humanoid robots are going to work at all, it must be alongside us and not for us. On the other hand, we may altogether abandon as unethical the project of replicating human life in machine form and concentrate solely on the non-humanoid form of robot.

It seems unlikely, though, that such machines could ever perform tasks with the dexterity, creativity and joy of human beings, and it may be counter-productive to invest the huge amounts of time and resources necessary to create phenomenally complex machines if they can only replicate the mundane work of Capak's originals. For a socialist society, humanoid robots may be breathtaking examples of human ingenuity, but little more.

QRIO - more ornament than use at present



...and Robocheffs

Life hectic? Too much stress? Can't be bothered to cook? Just go to your domestic organic recycler, tap in the code for 'chicken and chips', and the appropriate molecules are extracted from your underground organic waste vault (ugh) and reassembled into piping hot rosemary-flavoured poule et frites (yummy). What's even better, as this 'chicken' never lived to suffer in the first place, vegetarians might like it too. Far-fetched? Well, just a bit. This kind of molecular assembly, though theoretically possible, is several horizons beyond the current nanotechnology horizon, and at present only exists as the fabulous 'food replicator' seen on the Starship Enterprise.

With the Bush administration's determination to get humans back into space and on their way to Mars via the International Space Station, one offshoot

technology is exploring ways to make the food available to astronauts more interesting and varied (*New Scientist*, August 20). Since food ingredients in space have to have a long shelf-life without refrigeration, the challenge is to produce variety out of a limited repertoire. The new idea is to devise a mathematical language or 'grammar' to describe different foods, and then program a virtual food machine to synthesise or simulate these foods out of raw ingredients. While the feasibility of making such a machine compact enough for space flight is doubtful, with no restriction on size or number of ingredients the land-based potential is enormous. The machine could be programmed to develop its own recipes, perhaps by an evolutionary process, so that unthinkably interesting new foods could be born.

Pathfinders may sometimes give the impression that socialism will always

take advantage of any labour-saving technology that capitalism happens to come up with, but in this particular case it may well do the opposite. While the drive to automate tedious, arduous or dangerous work is clearly worthwhile, what is more questionable is whether we would ever want to automate enjoyable social practices. Even if a machine could come up with a recipe we never thought of, would it be worth it? In capitalism, where cut-throat competition makes the buck more important than the buzz, speed, innovation and output are what matter. Capitalism is always ruining the fun in everything, so that people begin to perceive almost any creative activity as dreary work to be avoided, or given to machines. In socialism, with its conflation of work and play at the centre of the social ethic, there will be some things people will always prefer to do themselves, and for each other, without the robots taking over. Sex is definitely one. Maybe cooking is another.

Extreme views

Dear Editors

I was not impressed with your card handed to me on the march in Edinburgh last month [July].



Your connection Make Poverty History with Capitalism was in very bad taste and I consider it a

disgrace. I am aware of the shortcomings of the present trading system and will continue to campaign for the aims of the Trade Justice Movement of which I am a member locally. However I do not want to be associated with your extreme views or the way you carry out your activities.

PHIL BARLOW, NOTTINGHAM

World problems

Dear Editors,

Many problems are faced today most especially in economical and political spheres of life. For instance, wars, workers' strikes, corruption, riots, and many others. These most happen in developing countries and some few developed countries and the influence comes direct from world powers.

The selfish ideas of the world powers, being hidden by these powers, are the root cause of the world atrocities in pretext that they are fighting terrorism, ending colonialism, fighting dictatorship among other decisive, political and economic selfish ideas.

It is a great challenge for all socialists to pronounce and advocate for socialist principles without fear or frustration from selfish politicians so that we come to save the world from the ongoing atrocities escalating from selfishness of those who only look for ways of getting richer and richer at the expense of the majority.

JOSEPH BALIKUDEMBE, KAMPALA, Uganda

Socialism, scientific and Canned laughter humanistic

Dear Editors

Since January the Pathfinders page has been a valuable addition to the *Socialist Standard*. In discussing socialism it recognises that we need to be consciously working for something, not simply against something.

In July I argued against the idea that voting and democracy would be significantly advanced by means of new technology. After reading the August Pathfinders I realise that my questioning of new technology developed within capitalism goes deeper than that. It is a matter of some interpretations of scientific socialism focusing on things and humanistic socialism (as I see it) focusing on people. Don't get me wrong - I'm not against scientific socialism. I just think that Pathfinders puts too much emphasis on things and not enough on people.

"If capitalism fed, clothed and looked after its people in peace and without coercion, socialism would not be disproved but it would be unnecessary." There is no evidence that capitalism can be changed to adequately feed and clothe all the world's population without coercion. So the idea that it can do these things remains a doubtful hypothesis. But even if capitalism could change its spots in the ways outlined, would that be the end of the socialist campaign for system change? I think not. Socialism is not about changes to capitalism - it is about replacing capitalism with another system. It is about a world society based on giving and taking, not on buying and selling.

"... the ability to micro-produce with minimal waste and distribution costs remains one of the most exciting innovations socialist society could possibly inherit." Pathfinders' fire is obviously lit by socialist methods of producing and distributing things. My fire is lit by the prospect of socialist relations between people (which will, of course, lead to changes in production, distribution, and much else).

STAN PARKER, LONDON N3.

Dear Editors,

Some people, including some socialists, used to get quite irritated about the way that recorded laughter was inserted into, first radio, then television, shows that went under the generic heading of comedy. But we have slowly got used to this feature of modern life in capitalist society. It is almost universal now. It is applied to quality comedy and poor comedy; those with real audiences and those with no possibility of an audience at all in the location of the action. Like antidepressant drugs, canned laughter is prescribed for nearly everybody. Because, let's face it, much of the time, if you didn't laugh, you'd cry.

Many aspects of living in this increasingly dysfunctional world society are moving in the same direction. In Japan, as well as North America and Europe shopping has become the diversionary avenue of seeking feel-good factors. Clothes, to make us feel good about our appearance; various types of car, to make us comfortable about our status among our neighbours; health foods, to make us feel healthy; exotic foods to make us feel opulent; gyms, to make us feel confident or even superior about our physical fitness and sexual attractiveness. Houses, gardens, kitchens, etc., etc. Our electronic gadgetry, from mobile phones and digital cameras to MP3 recorders and players, offer us more power to do things we hadn't even thought of and probably will never try.

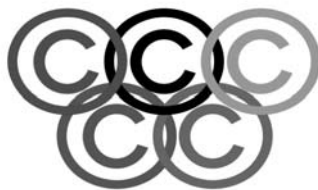
The planet is being pillaged, plundered and polluted to make commodities for us to buy, partly because we need them and capital must have the flow of profit, but increasingly in the effort to obliterate our basic hunger for freedom, the one thing we cannot have. Like canned laughter, the temporary lift we get from commodity gratification is artificial, false. It hides a bad joke.

RON COOK, WEST BROMWICH

This One Will Run and Run

The news that the 2012 Olympic Games had been awarded to London sent the Stock Exchange Index up to a three-year high - the biggest gains in share price were for a company that specialises in wiring sports stadia and other landmark attractions. Clearly many companies hope for an economic bonanza, especially those involved in construction and the hotel industry. Staging the games may be enormously expensive, but some firms at least will make an awful lot of money out of it. The Olympics, after all, are only in passing about sport; they are also about nationalism and, primarily, profits.

Only a small part of the income will come from ticket sales - the overwhelming majority is from the sale of broadcasting rights and corporate sponsorship. So important is this last point that companies who aren't official sponsors are likely to be banned from associating themselves with the games in any way (*Evening Standard* 7 July). The government will guide an Olympics Bill through parliament, designed among other things to prevent 'ambush advertising', where companies pass themselves off as somehow linked to the games, whether as sponsors or not. However ludicrous this sounds, it's not unique. The 2003 cricket World Cup in South Africa was sponsored by Pepsi, and spectators drinking Coca-Cola were ejected from



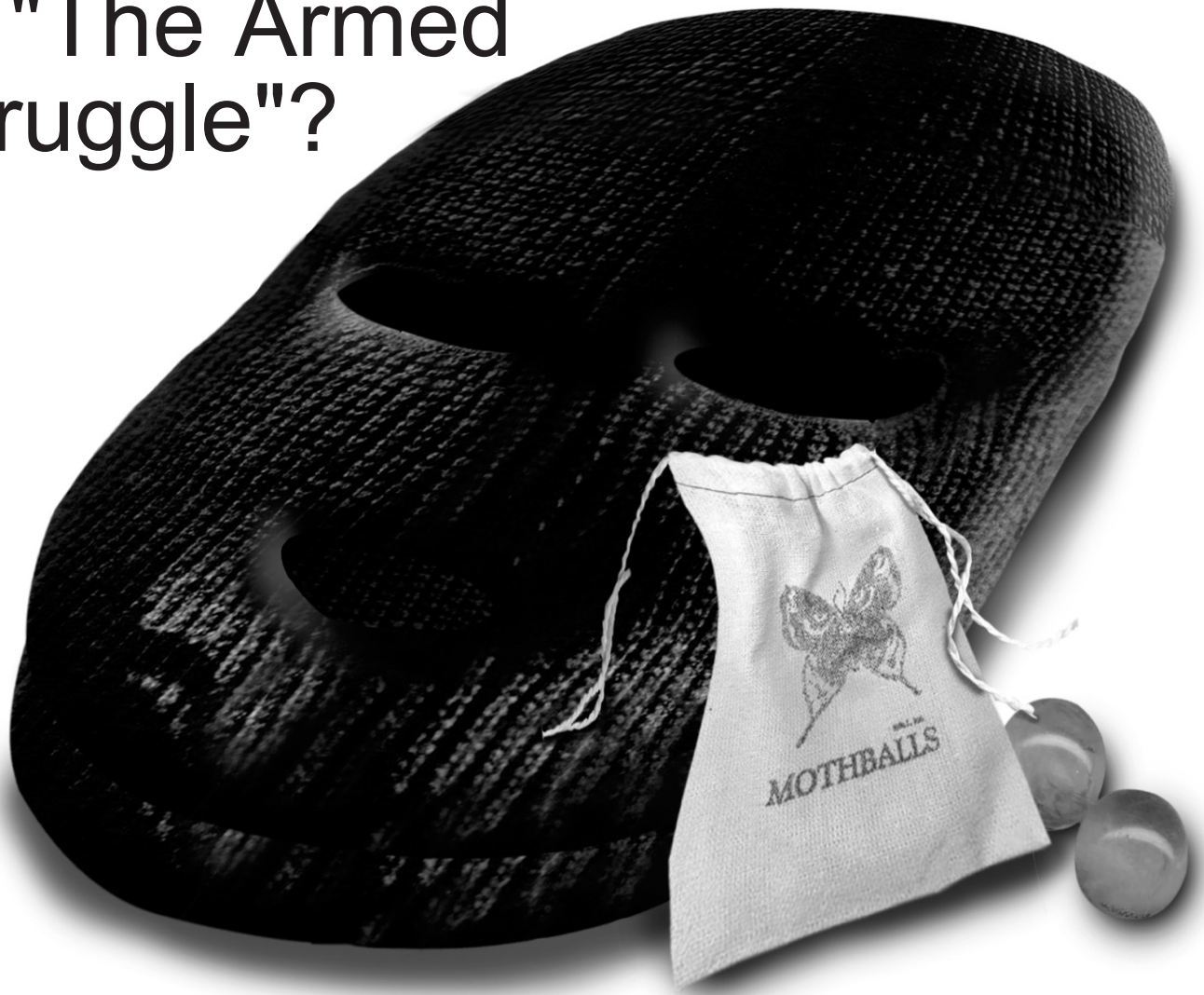
venues; moreover, this was sanctioned by new marketing laws introduced by the government. (*In No Logo* Naomi Klein mentions an American high school which held an official Coke Day with lots of promotional activities, but where one student was suspended for going to school in a T-shirt with a Pepsi logo.) At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, companies had to pay to use any kind of Olympic name or logo (including some that had been established for years under the name of 'Olympic').

One of the principles of capitalism is that ownership of something gives you exclusive rights over its use, including whether, and how, you allow others to have access to it. This applies not just to physical things such as land, oil, rivers and factories but also to ideas and inventions - hence the development of patents and protection for 'intellectual property', and the clamping down on counterfeit and imitation goods. And, as we can now see, it also holds for particular names and logos, and for advertising space.

The International Olympic Committee jealously guards its control over the Olympic name and advertising at the games venues. Companies who pay hefty fees for sponsorship buy the 'right' to advertise and sell their products, to the exclusion of any direct competitors. Just as football stadia are now named after corporations and products such as Reebok and Walkers' Crisps, and clubs do their

continued on page 18

IRA: Is it Really the End of "The Armed Struggle"?



The leadership of Oglai na h'Eireann has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. This will take effect from 4pm this afternoon. All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms" (Extract from IRA statement of 28 July)

So the IRA has given up the gun for the ballot box - but not for the first time.

In 1956 it was reluctantly pushed by its young activists to begin a 'Border Campaign'. Within a few months the campaign had deteriorated into cutting down a few telegraph poles and issuing grandiose statements about the activities of their commandos. Away from the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic this new phase of the interminable 'troubles' was hardly noticed. Everybody but the IRA knew their campaign was going nowhere. Internment, both in the north and in the south, emaciated the movement and inevitably internal disputes in the internment camps began to fester among the volunteers.

It took the IRA's Army Council five more years before it announced the formal termination of the Border Campaign but at last, in 1962, Oglai na h'Eireann, the Irish Republican Army, issued what was as near as possible a notice of surrender. It admitted that it had not achieved the necessary

support from the nationalist (Catholic) community in Northern Ireland; in fact it castigated the nationalists claiming that they had sold 'their heritage for a mess of pottage' - a reference to the scheme of welfare capitalism introduced in Britain after the war and extended to Northern Ireland.

Henceforth, the IRA was taking the gun out of Irish politics - the IRA spokesperson, the legendary 'P O'Neill', actually said that - and would confine its activities to political campaigns on social issues.

Behind the scenes a coterie of Leninists had defeated the death-or-glory boys of traditional Republicanism and took control of the IRA's Army Council. This element saw the IRA as the nucleus of a political movement that would use the atrocious political and social conditions in the North as a catalyst for uniting workers who traditionally opposed one another on religious grounds. The Rosary brigade, those for whom republicanism and Catholicism were synonymous terms, were appalled by this 'rank communism' and left the movement.

The IRA then transformed itself into 'Republican Clubs' in furtherance of its plans. Up to then, the Unionist government had claimed to accept the right of

republicans to use constitutional means to achieve a united Ireland. Such a claim did not represent a political threat to Unionism, which, at the birth of the state in 1921, had helped demographically tailor the territory of Northern Ireland to ensure that they had a two-to-one majority based on the religious topography of the six north-eastern counties of the ancient Province of Ulster. Despite this guarantee, they immediately banned the Republican Clubs.

Traditionally, the IRA had based its claim to use physical force on the results of the elections of 1918 which was the last general election held in Ireland before the country was arbitrarily divided by the British government. Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, won an overall majority in that election and established the first Dail Eireann which was effectively banned by the British.

Six counties

A brutal guerrilla war ensued during which the Westminster politicians showed that they were the 'moral' equal of those they called terrorists by recruiting mercenaries who terrorised the populace in an effort to frighten support away from the IRA. The tactic had the reverse effect but eventually, as now, British ministers sat down with the 'terrorists'. Under threat, an unsatisfactory

peace deal was negotiated which divided Ireland into the 26-county Irish Free State and the 6-county state of Northern Ireland.

This 'solution' split the IRA and resulted in a bloody civil war between Free State forces - armed by the British - and a rump of the IRA who were dubbed 'Irregulars'. The latter, the ideological antecedents of the present Provisional IRA, were defeated and they and their followers glumly pronounced that both the new governments on the Island of Ireland were 'illegal' and a betrayal of the holy grail of 'The Republic' as proclaimed by the new-born IRA in the insurrection of 1916. Dail Eireann, the legend went, had transferred its executive authority to the Army Council of the IRA and, thenceforth, any group claiming to be the rightful heirs of the 1916 Declaration of the Republic could grandiosely claim to be the de facto government of Ireland.

The political leader and, then, icon of the defeated Irregulars was Eamon De Valera. Despite being the main architect of the politics that resulted in the Civil War 'Dev', as he was known, was a pragmatic politician who realised the absurdity of further military adventures against the Free State. In 1926 he formed a new political party, Fianna Fail, to challenge the party in government, Cumann na nGaedheal (later, as now, Fine Gael) and in 1932 Fianna Fail won an outright victory at a general election and De Valera became Taoiseach. It was a bad day for later incarnations of the IRA, for despite having created the genre of dissident Republicans, Dev, who held power until 1948, proved a bitter, even vicious, enemy of the IRA.

The modern IRA

It is important to take this brief look back at the history of the IRA because it raises an important question. Following the Civil War in 1922, the split within the movement and then the desertion of De Valera, the organisation never regained any real political influence in Ireland until 1970 and the establishment of yet another breakaway movement, the Provisional IRA.

The IRA admitted in 1962 that the Northern Catholic nationalists had not supported its brief, inglorious 'border campaign' but what were the new material conditions that brought about general Catholic support for the Provisional IRA after 1970? And what lessons may it have for the future, both in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain which is now facing a terrorist threat of an even more menacing kind?

The IRA's 1962 decision to pursue a constitutional campaign based on social issues paradoxically fused with an aspect of the new mood of northern nationalists who had earlier rejected the IRA. Generally, after the war and the benefits of some UK social reforms, nationalists were becoming increasingly reconciled to acceptance of the northern state. In 1965 Britain and the Republic of Ireland signed a Free Trade Agreement and after this the few nationalist politicians in the Northern Ireland parliament at Stormont accepted the role (and the salaries) of Her Majesty's Opposition. But, if they were going to be loyal then they wanted the apparatus of religious discrimination and vote-rigging to be dismantled.

What happened was that the Republicans managed to tap into this mood.



A NICRA sitdown protest, November 1968



A victim of the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre

Unionist politicians and fascist-type bigots like the hot-gospeller Ian Paisley, were to claim that the subsequent Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement was a creature of the IRA but it wasn't this simple; in fact it was established by a younger, more active genre of nationalists, products of the 1944 British Education Acts, and it resulted in a coalescing of anti-Unionist factions including the IRA in its Republican Clubs incarnation.

Taking its cue from the American Civil Rights campaign, the new movement adopted the name Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and proceeded to use the same tactics of massed demonstrations and protests in pursuit of its demands. The Unionist Prime Minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, was not averse to granting the basic demands of the NICRA and had he been able to do so it is likely that Catholic nationalist anger would have been defused and the violence of the following thirty years avoided but Paisley was rousing old anti-Catholic bigotries in the unionist community - and, incidentally, using that bigotry to forge a political career

that would bring rewards well beyond his modest Bible-thumping talents.

Faced with government bans, NICRA turned to civil disobedience and the government ordered the armed police, which the Unionists had traditionally used as their private army, to use force against 'illegal' demonstrations. Television pictures showing the police (RUC) attacking non-violent marchers were flashed around the world much to the discomfort of the British government which was the ultimate authority in Northern Ireland.

Events were hurrying towards a bitter sectarian pogrom. Protestant loyalists, assisted by the B Specials (an exclusively Protestant paramilitary auxiliary police force) torched Catholic homes; some ex-IRA men went to the Dublin leadership of the IRA to seek arms to defend the Catholic ghettos in Belfast and Derry and were told that IRA arms would not be made available for sectarian warfare. In Belfast, Republican dissidents were appalled at this response; the 'communist' leadership was denounced by much of the rank-and-file and the Provisional IRA was born, leaving two IRA's - the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA, both claiming to be the executive heirs of the only legitimate Dail Eireann. Extreme Catholic conservatives within the Irish government, fearful of the consequences of 'communist' influences, helped to procure arms for the new PIRA.

Pawns in a game

The rest is the story of the brutal conflict that became Northern Ireland's 'Dirty War'. Now the IRA is standing down its foot soldiers. There were three sides to the war: the British Army/RUC, the Provisional IRA and the various Protestant paramilitary organisations. As a first step in accounting, we can say that none can claim victory. It is always the working class that make up the pawns in armies, legal and illegal, and the end of a war never brings them victory. The other thousands who died were just the innocent victims of those who were at war.

Ironically, Paisley's strident anti-Catholicism played a major role in galvanising the Catholics into open rebellion. 'No truck with Dublin' has been his war cry but his hard-line bigotry has now brought about a situation of virtual joint authority between London and Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Paisley, whose fight for Ulster went only as far as throwing snowballs at Jack Lynch when he visited Stormont as Irish Taoiseach, is obliged to discuss policy with both the British and Irish Prime Ministers.

On the other hand, the Provisional IRA, whose war aim was to end partition, drive out the British and abolish the state of Northern Ireland have succeeded only in establishing a claim to be part of the political administration of the state they set out to abolish!

Eventually the politicians on both sides will have to reach an accommodation to work the structures of government established by the Good Friday Agreement. The salaries and the expenses are good and the leaders can write of a finish to a satisfactory war.

But what have the workers across the infamous religious divide got? As so many times before, they have simply been used as pawns. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

We have conclusive proof that Tony Blair doesn't read the Socialist Standard. In these pages last month, we warned that trying to suppress religion or religious expression is not going to stem any terror threat. Yet now, the Prime Minister has stood before the media, vowing to close down Mosques where religious extremism is preached. Yet, censorship has never worked to suppress any ideology or movement.

The Blairites have long been proud of their writing the European Convention of Human Rights into British law. Yet Tony Blair has stood before the media vowing to amend the act so as to enable his government to use draconian powers against those it suspects - but cannot prove in a court of law - to be involved in the promotion of terrorism. We have, also, in these pages before, warned that human rights legislation was a paper thin protection against the might of the organised violence of the state. Thus it proves, when inalienable rights get in the way of untrammelled state power, they get torn asunder. There are rights, but only when they don't matter, it seems.

Tony Blair has stood before the media of the world, venting sound and fury because the levers of state he controls with such ultimate power are inadequate to stem the terrorist tide. Kings and Prime Ministers have long been



Blair - bit of a Cnut, but still can't stop the tide

able to do whatever they pleased with the machinery of state - but their record in stopping the seas is somewhat dismal. The state has ultimate power over our bodies - life or death, but it reaches its limits at people's minds.

People's consciousness is not something that can be shaped by fiat - a minuted cabinet meeting declaring that all inhabitants of Britain will be loyal citizens. People's consciousness is an outgrowth of their life every bit as much as their arms or their hair. Socialists know from long (and bitter) experience, that merely expounding an idea to someone will not move them. There has to be the basis of agreement already in their minds, based on their experience of the world and their values, for any ideas to take hold.

The notion that merely preaching is enough to turn people into suicide bombers is itself a part of the same flawed premise upon which religion is based: that people choose to believe. The idea that people are outside the world around them, separate from the chains of causation they can see in nature. It is also a projection of the self-image of the great leaders who believe that they can bend people's wills to whatever they wish, like some great impresario in the circus ring. Religion itself is subject to materialist explanation. It is, in fact, an effort of human beings to understand the world around them. Beginning with the ancient religions that explained natural phenomena in terms of beings with human-like minds controlling events. That is, early cultures explained the world with reference to the thing they knew best,

humans and human behaviour. Projecting human relationships on natural objects - for instance by making gifts to the fields and rivers in return for favours like not flooding.

As civilisation grew, religion - as the attempt to understand the world - changed to adapt to the new environment. Different types of gods grew up, who behaved suspiciously like the despots who governed the world at that time. The growth of widespread kingdoms lead to the development of divisions of labour which established priestly castes and codified myths to establish a common religious narrative (which helped in co-ordinating things like the kingdom-wide harvesting of crops). The essential ingredient, though, of projecting a human gift relationship on the world remained.

Around the first century of the Common Era (CE) this process led to the spread of the great monotheistic religions. At the time, Rome was spreading its influence over the near east. As trade and commerce extended, local tribal formations became more fluid, and so the image of one Emperor ruling over a vast differentiated domain easily gave rise to the idea of one God ruling over the entire Earth. People were obliged to obey that God much as they would have to obey the Emperor, lest they face his fierce and arbitrary wrath. The religion that most successfully encompassed that sort of world experience was Christianity, which grew to be the dominant and official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century CE under Constantine.

Likewise, Islam (Literally 'Submission to the will of god') emerged around 600 CE - propagated by Muhammed, a wealthy and well-travelled merchant. The Arab peoples at that time were divided and living in the shadows of the great Byzantine and Persian Empires (empires characterised by centralised monotheistic religious uniformity). It was to Muhammed and his movement's advantage to copy this style of thinking and organising, as they began to spread their fledgling empire and unite the Arab tribes into a power.

That is, these religions in their time were rational observations of how both the natural and social worlds operated. Even, in some senses, progressive in their advancement of human understanding and the growth of civilisation. They stemmed from a need to understand a world that stretched beyond immediate apprehension and sense and spread over vast and intermingling empires. Lacking modern data capture or inquiry techniques, such empires could only be apprehended by metaphors for the



Religion and the limits of the State

emperors that ruled them.

The religions born then continued to be at the forefront of attempts to understand the world for many years, either as direct means of explaining phenomena, or as paradigms into which new explanations and observations could and must be incorporated. If everything happens by the will of god, then knowing the mind of god is the only logical form of investigative endeavour.

As data capture and the technology of natural science advanced over the subsequent thousand years, the value of the religious explanations began to be questioned. In Western Europe, this led to a division between the concept of science and of religion. As various physical world-truth claims of religion - such as that of the position of the Earth in relation to the Sun - came under sustained challenge - by Copernicus, in 1514 CE - the established religious elites fought back, using raw political power and wealth.

This meant that the ideologues of religion came up with more and more ways to defend their world-view from the challenge of the new scientific methods - retreating (in some cases) to the point of defending religion as a mere personal preference in areas where facts could not be proved in the same way as in the natural sciences. That is, they clung on to the social sciences for a further three hundred years. All ethics and social theory was made by reference to the assumed existence of a despotic deity.

Class struggle broke out over



Cooking the Books (1)

The waste of competition

Supporters of capitalism praise competition to the skies, seeing it as a means of keeping prices down and of ensuring that "consumers" get what they want.

Socialists, on the other hand, have always seen economic competition as being (besides the cause of modern wars) an inefficient and wasteful way of distributing what people need and want. For a start, it involves an unnecessary multiplication of productive units and distribution outlets with all the extra resources this uses up. Then there are the resources used up in marketing and advertising, which is aimed merely at persuading people to buy from one firm or shop as opposed to another and which adds absolutely nothing to the amount of wealth in existence.

No wonder Marx commented on capitalism's "way of distributing products through trade, and its manner of competition" being "very wasteful of material resources" (Volume III of *Capital*, chapter 5 on "Economy in the use of constant capital").

So it was rather surprising to hear the head of a profit-seeking capitalist enterprise, Charles Allen, chief executive of ITV plc, echo this socialist criticism of capitalism in the evidence he gave on 7 June to a House of Lords committee looking into the renewal of the BBC's charter. Asked by the Bishop of Manchester (yes, it's part of the "democratic deficit" in Britain that bishops of the Church of England are automatically members of parliament) about possible co-operation with the BBC in the North-West, Allen replied that he was all in favour of the BBC, ITV and others sharing the same programme-making studios, adding:

"A lot of money is wasted through duplication: we have our own studios; they have their own studios; we have our own transmission; they have their own transmission; we have our own infrastructure; they have their own infrastructure. What I am really keen to do is actually get the money on the screen rather than wasted in infrastructure" (www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld/lduncorr/bbc0706.pdf).

Wasted in infrastructure! True, but this applies across the board to all manufacturing industry, services, shops and supermarkets. There's wasteful duplication (triplication, and more) there too.

What Allen apparently wants in broadcasting is the same sham competition as exists in the supply of electricity, gas and telephones. There's only one infrastructure here too - only one national electricity grid, for example - with competition limited to firms wasting resources on trying to steal customers from each other.

In socialism resources can be saved to produce needed and useful things by only having one type of distribution outlet in neighbourhoods and only one factory producing computers, cars, washing machines, etc in any one region. Then, we really could concentrate resources on producing best-quality useful things rather than wasting them on duplicated infrastructures.



religious impulse. As, however, technical competence was increasingly required for work, so has a growth of understanding of science and the world that sees much of western religion driven to either the merest shadow of its former acceptance, if not outright agnosticism (though many still accept the arguments of the theists over religion and belief over things which cannot be proven).

In many parts of the world, traditional religious castes still retain a strong sway - Catholic priests were wheeled out in Portugal to explain the euro, for instance. Where social and economic development has not provided a practical impetus to challenge the teachings and presumptions of religion, it has remained strong. Gaining a further power as a means of giving a sense of identity and community to ways of life that are under apparent external threat - as in parts of the Muslim world and their reaction to western economic domination. Also, people in politically marginalised and powerless communities - like much of the rural United States - are turning to religious fundamentalism in the face of their own lack of control over their own and their communities' lives.

The resurgence of the old authoritarian religions is a growing problem. Politicians who also like to think of themselves as believers do not want to challenge the presuppositions and premises of these religions, but instead try to incorporate them so as not to challenge the structure of existing society.

Socialists oppose religion for its anachronistic premises, for the barrier it presents to scientifically examining and controlling our own lives and destinies. Religion starts by placing humans outside the natural world - with anthropomorph deities shaping the world and people's free will allowing them to obey and believe. Humans are part of the world, and are amenable to scientific behavioural study, and it is understanding that that will allow us to liberate ourselves, and control ourselves and our destinies.

Argument alone will not suffice to remove religion and religious strife from the world, it will take the material interest of a common cause and a common struggle to build a democratic society where people stand in real relation to each other, not seeing each other reflected in the eyes of some ancient Middle Eastern despot's mad dream. .

PIK SMEET ■

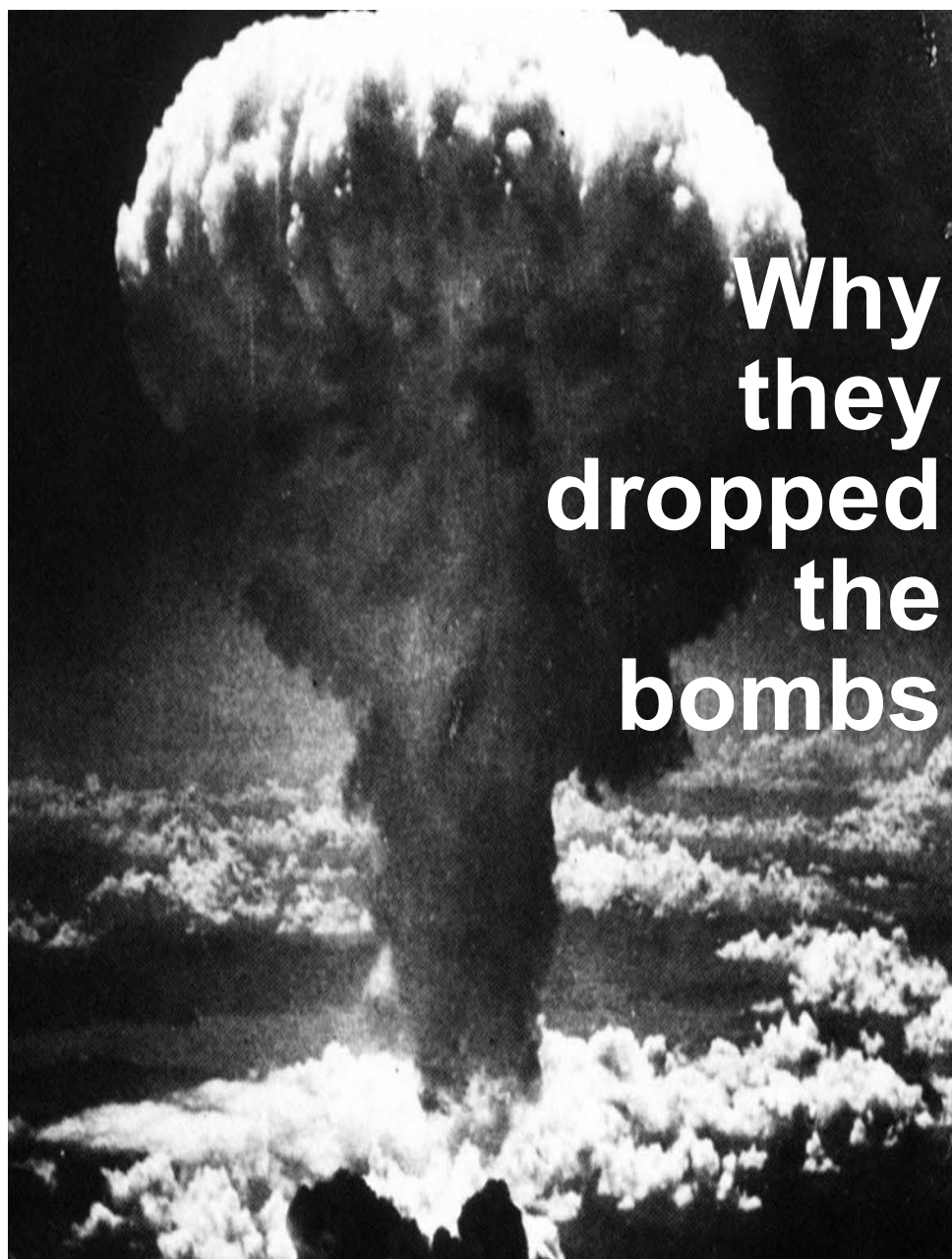
More on the Marxian socialist analysis of religion can be found at www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/pdf/sar.pdf and www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoe/1947/religion.htm



Europe. The rising bourgeoisie challenged their feudal masters, and in so doing challenged the idea of obeying the dictates of a despotic god, instead trying to privatise conscience and change the relationship to a more contractual one. This meant challenging the religious authorities on the ground of social science, and meant that other theories could be opened up for debate - empiricism and rationalism and later idealism. They challenged simply accepting facts and truth claims based on authority. They challenged obedience to a set of simplistic rules set down by the Emperor. It was a revolutionary challenge.

This challenge lasted only as long as there was a stake in it. Once the bourgeoisie was finally ensured of power, the religious questions didn't matter as much, and in fact proved to be a useful way of defending their new found supremacy from the challenge of the nascent working class. The same weapon of social science which helped them to power was now being used against them, to show how their rule was exploitative and domineering. The old religion became a means of justifying their rule to themselves and to their subordinates, as they spread their system across the globe.

To the extent that the working class felt themselves powerless, they were willing to accept an explanation of the world that gave them some measure of understanding and control - much as for the humans at the formation of the first



Why they dropped the bombs

Last month saw the 60th anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The media mostly contented itself with repeating the myth that this was the lesser evil to continuing the war by conventional means. In a two-part article Richard Headicar uncovers the real reason for the bombings: to test the destructive power of a new weapon for use in future wars.

'Fat Man', the Nagasaki plutonium bomb, and what was left afterwards



A common charge levelled at those who challenge the (still largely believed) established myth concerning the dropping of the atomic

bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is that they do so from the comfortable perspective of hindsight. This view was most elegantly formulated by Albert R. Hunt, writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on 3 August 1995: "The critics view the situation through the prism of today and side-step both how the situation looked to decision-makers in 1945 and the political realities facing them".

At first glance a not unreasonable observation but one which, upon closer examination, is revealed as somewhat disingenuous. Firstly, because, given that such a vast amount of crucial and enlightening information was for many years kept secret (much still is), anything other than hindsight concerning many areas of knowledge would have been pure speculation. Secondly, because there existed a number of contemporary critics. Many of these were closely involved in the production of the bomb, others from the military and some, even, close to the president.

Before proceeding to disentangle the web of lies and deception surrounding this subject, it is important to emphasise that, whatever the reasons for the decision to drop the bombs, it was a consequence of a brutal and ruthless conflict between warring capitalist states. A British First Sea Lord once put it: "Moderation in war is imbecility". Today there are few military 'conventions' and any that remain are almost sure to be violated. Rest assured, had any one of the main protagonists in the Second World War obtained an atomic bomb before the United States, they would almost certainly have used it with a similar alacrity and disdain for human life.

Who took the decision to drop the bomb?

Although, of course, it was President Harry Truman who had to give final approval (British consent, a formality required by agreement, was readily granted) he was the new boy on the block relying heavily on his advisors. General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project to manufacture the bomb, famously described Truman as "a little boy on a toboggan". Once the decision had been made to produce the atomic bomb and the process of manufacturing it had begun, it was always assumed by the military and politicians that it would be used. In that sense no actual decision was ever a real necessity.

Nevertheless, formalities and procedures were prudently followed and, in order to work out the practical details and make suitable recommendations, various committees were established. The two most important of these were the Interim Committee (political, plus a co-opted scientific panel) and the Target Committee (military and scientific). General Groves headed the Target Committee and although not a member of the Interim Committee, was always present at its meetings. He was an unswerving advocate for deployment of the bomb. As he bluntly explained: "It would not have looked well if I had been appointed to serve on a committee of civilians. But I was present at all meetings and I always considered it my duty to recommend that the bomb be dropped."

The chairman of the Interim Committee was the Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. On 3 May 1945, he proposed a further member who was to have a most significant influence on events: James F. Byrne, soon to become the Secretary of State to President Truman. His views on the dropping of the bomb were as rampantly in favour of those of Groves and



together they formed the irresistible force that, more than any other, led to the final cataclysmic devastation of those two unlucky Japanese cities. As the physicist Arthur H. Compton put it: "The Scientific Panel was not called to decide the question of whether the bomb should be used, but only how it should be used . . . it . . . seemed to be a forgone conclusion."

Minutes taken at the meeting of the Interim Committee on 1 June 1945 recorded:

"Mr Byrnes recommended and the committee agreed, that . . . the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used on a war plant surrounded by workers' homes; and that it be used without prior warning."

On 25 July 1945 a directive approved by the Secretary of War, but which had been previously composed by Groves, manifested US intentions and confirmed previous assumptions in its first two sections:

"(1) The 509 Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after 3 August 1945 on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki

"(2) Additional bombs will be delivered on the above targets as soon as made ready by the project staff."

Whether or not that directive constituted a decision and whether Stimson and Truman or Byrnes and Groves bore most responsibility for it remains a matter of some debate. The theory of the "forgone conclusion" gains some credibility from the response given to Groves when, in January 1945, he suggested to his immediate superior, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall, that detailed plans should be drawn up for the employment of the bomb in war. He was told "see to it yourself".

Were they military targets?

"The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in the first instance to avoid, in so far as possible, the killing of civilians". President Harry S. Truman (9 August 1945).

All of the cities on the target list (like most reasonably sized cities in time of war) were of some military significance. Five of them, with the agreement of the Air Force, were to be spared any further aerial bombardment from May 1945 onwards. These were Hiroshima, Kyoto, Yokohama, Kokura Arsenal and Niigata. On the express orders of the Secretary of War, Stimson, Kyoto - considered to be the cultural centre of Japan and a beautiful city that Stimson had once visited - was removed from the list and Nagasaki took its place. The truth is, of course, that the US Air Force could have destroyed any military target that it chose to. Japanese air defences were practically non-existent and of Japan's sixty-six largest cities, fifty-nine had been destroyed; the seven remaining partly so. By the summer of 1945 only two cities

with populations exceeding a quarter of a million had not been assailed by incendiary raids.

Since Hiroshima was designated as a major port and home of Regional Army Headquarters and the northern sectors of Nagasaki contained the Mitsubishi Steel and Arms Works, why did they remain largely untouched (Hiroshima hardly damaged at all and Nagasaki comparatively unscathed)? The answer is provided by the proposals of the Target Committee, 27 April 1945:

"To enable us to assess accurately the effects of the bomb, the targets should not have been previously damaged by air raids."

Nagasaki had been bombed to some extent but it was only a late addition to the target list and was not first choice even on the day the bomb was dropped on it - that had been Kokura Arsenal.

Further recommendations made by the committee were that ". . . the first target be of such size that the damage would be confined within it, so that we could more definitely determine the power of the bomb". Then from a further meeting on 10 and 11 May came the clear (and fortunately documented) instruction: ". . . to neglect location of industrial areas as pin point target . . . [and] . . . to endeavour to place first gadget in center of selected city; that is, not to allow for later 1 or 2 gadgets for complete destruction."

To erase any lingering doubts a subsequent Bombing Survey Report stated: "Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets because of their concentration of activities and population".

Was it necessary to drop the bombs?

One of the most commonly accepted beliefs is that, horrific though it was, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved millions of lives - Japanese as well as American - by bringing about a swift end to the war and forestalling a bloody invasion. We are reminded about the massive casualties already suffered by both sides in the Pacific War. Particularly about the fanatical defence by the Japanese of Iwo Jima, Luzon and Okinawa. But although there were plans for an invasion they were contingency plans.

The first stage - "Olympic" - was to land at the island of Kyushu on 1 November 1945. No assault on the main island, Honshu, - "Coronet" - was scheduled until 1 March 1946. In the light of what we now know, it seems doubtful that the need for any kind of invasion would ever have arisen. Japan was certainly not defenceless. It still had a Home army of more than two million troops, many prepared to fight to the

death for their Emperor. Also, as well as conventional planes, there were thousands of kamikaze, mines, beach fortifications, etc, and the remnants of the navy. Their problem was one of deployment. But as the US Strategic Bombing Survey concluded, less than a year after the bomb had been dropped:

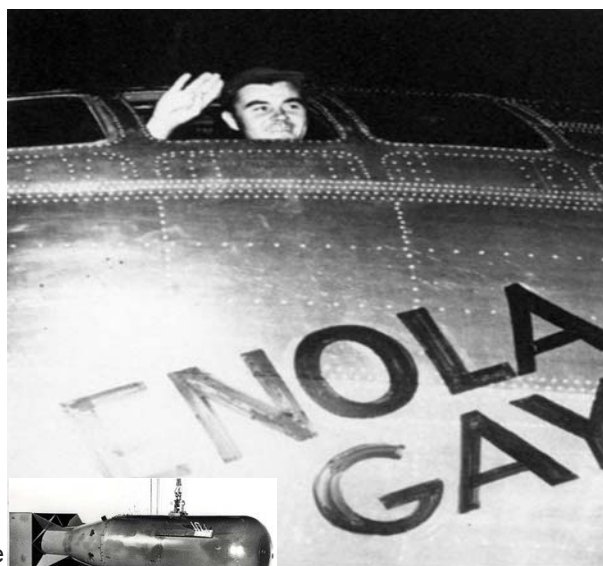
"Certainly before 31 December 1945 and in all probability before 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bomb had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

Some historians argue that the bombs were unnecessary precisely because Russia intended to enter the war, so the conclusion of the Strategic Bombing Survey was all the more remarkable. Less so, however, when the reality of the Japanese military situation is properly examined. Their navy was virtually finished; their army was described by Hanson W. Baldwin as consisting of "Green conscripts and second rate troops"; communication lines were in disarray; fuel was in extremely short supply; roads were in a poor state of repair; transport and transportation could be bombed at will; ports were becoming paralysed; food was scarce; illness through malnutrition was an increasing problem and (not surprisingly) public morale was diminishing by the day. In marked contrast to this, the US armed might remained immensely powerful.

All of this was known to the US



The blinding light burnt cloth patterns onto skin



The pilot and plane that bombed Hiroshima, and (inset) 'Little Boy', the uranium bomb used.



administration and military and the ludicrous estimates of projected invasion casualties - ranging from "hundreds of thousands" to "millions" - were post-war exaggerations designed to contribute to the successful establishment of a public justification for the dropping of the bombs. Major General Curtis E. LeMay expressed the truth quite bluntly a few weeks after formal surrender of the Japanese Emperor. "The atomic bomb," he stated, "had nothing to do with the end of the war".

But the reasons were not merely military ones.

(To be concluded next month)

RICHARD HEADICAR



Zapatistas, and Emiliano Zapata

Are we all Zapatistas?

We are all Zapatistas" has been painted on banners, walls and shouted at demonstrations in recent years. The slogan has been used by leftists, anarchists, advocates of fair-trade schemes and even for commercial gain. But who are the Zapatistas?

The Zapatistas take their name from Emiliano Zapata who led the *Ejército Libertador del Sur* (Liberation Army of the South) during the Mexican Revolutionary war from 1910 until his assassination in 1919. During the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz which preceded the revolution much of the land farmed by the indigenous people was enclosed to form *haciendas* or ranches for the production of food for export markets forcing peasants into, both wage- and debt-slavery to the often cruel ranch owners. Zapata's army sought to institute the Plan of Ayala for the repossession of the *haciendas* for landless peasants where pre-enclosure legal titles existed and partial expropriation of land, with compensation, where legal titles didn't exist. The Liberation Army of the South initially fought the federal forces who sought to uphold the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Zapata's army also fought the constitutionalist forces which eventually replaced Díaz as well as the intervening military dictatorship.

Despite the defeat of Zapata's army, the 1917 Mexican Constitution contained a

provision for the return of communal lands appropriated by the *haciendas* and to provide new lands called *ejidos* to landless peasants. Communal lands and *ejidos* are owned by the people of a village and plots within the designated areas are divided amongst individual families to work. However, this article of the constitution was never fully implemented, or yielded only small or unproductive land areas to the peasants. In 1992, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari revoked the constitutional commitment protecting communal land from private ownership in preparation for implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The NAFTA would also remove agricultural price support affecting peasants who were increasingly reliant on small scale cash crop production.

On the day the NAFTA came into force the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN, Zapatista Army of National Liberation) officially declared war on the Mexican government and invaded six main population centres and many ranches in the Chiapas region of south eastern Mexico. It is the EZLN and their supporters that are referred to as Zapatistas.

Open conflict in Chiapas lasted twelve bloody days in which hundreds lost their lives mainly due to aerial bombardment of EZLN-held towns by the Mexican army. By 1995, tens of thousands of troops were stationed in the region. There has been

little open combat since, but a network of checkpoints, army patrols, military incursions and alliances with local paramilitary groups have been used to intimidate and wear down the EZLN. The EZLN signed an accord with the Mexican Government in 1996 to institute peace and political rights for the people of Chiapas, though the government later reneged on many of the provisions. Paramilitaries, who have subsequently been linked to local landowners and ruling party officials, assassinated 45 Zapatistas in the town of Acteal in December 1997.

Chiapas is about the same size (area and population) as the Republic of Ireland. The area has a long history of conflict over land. Peasants have been forced onto the thin, rocky soils and steep slopes of the highlands with the encroachment of cattle ranching, coffee and sugar plantations from the more fertile lowland regions. Land availability has also been reduced by forestry and mineral, gas and oil extraction operations. Migration from neighbouring Guatemala, migration of those fleeing poverty in Mexico and the return of many of those who had migrated to urban areas for employment after crisis of capitalism in the early 1980s caused rapid population increase and eventual retreat into the inhospitable Lacandon jungle where the Zapatista rebellion is centred.

The EZLN was formed in the early 1980s by Leninists who had migrated into

the Chiapas jungle to lead the peasantry to revolution. One of those who joined the EZLN was the man now known as Subcommandante Marcos, the Zapatista's military leader and most famous spokesman. The EZLN found that many of the peasants there could not support the idea of the revolutionary vanguard and language of 'Marxism'. What followed was what Marcos calls a period of "indianization". The Leninist founders of the EZLN steeped themselves in native Mayan culture. In the words of Marcos, quoted by Yvon Le Bot (*El Sueño Zapatista*, 1997):

"Suddenly the revolution transformed itself into something essentially moral. Ethical. More than the redistribution of wealth or the expropriation of the means of production, the revolution began to be the possibility for a human being to have a space for dignity."

The "indianization" of the EZLN seemed to infuse the organisation with the local traditions of direct and decentralised democracy. However, in material terms the EZLN retained much of the previous reformist ideology. The *Declaration of War*, written in 1993, stated that the EZLN was acting legitimately to overthrow the ruling government because of their unconstitutional actions. The statement also says that the EZLN proudly carry the national flag into battle.

In June this year the EZLN announced a new political initiative in the *Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona*. They suggest a national campaign,

"which will be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people, in order to demand that we make a new Constitution, new laws which take into account the demands of the Mexican people, which are: housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace. We are also letting you know that the EZLN will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left, . . ."

The stipulations for organisations wishing to join the national campaign are a democratic structure and a "clear commitment for joint and co-ordinated defence of national sovereignty, with intransigent opposition to privatization attempts of electricity, oil, water and natural resources." In addition, the Zapatistas offered food aid to Cuba for their resistance to the USA's embargo, express admiration for Che Guevara and Simon Bolivar and offered to send handicrafts, coffee or soup to activists in Europe to help with the struggle against neo-liberalism. The Zapatistas clearly think that capitalism can be run in the interests of the workers through state possession of industry and with the absence of the intervention by foreign capital.

The EZLN stopped making demands for constitutional rights from the Mexican government in 2001 and began to form a state within a state. This is described by Marcos in *Chiapas: The Thirteenth Step* as involving the withdrawal of the EZLN from civil matters and establishment of self-governing villages or Autonomous

Municipalities, with recallable and rotated functionaries. In August 2003, the 'Juntas of Good Government' were formed. These are regional councils which take the functions of administering justice, taxation, healthcare, education, housing, land, work, food, commerce, information and culture, and local movement from the EZLN. Marcos states that there have been improvements in living conditions as well as improvements in gender equality in the notoriously patriarchal peasant societies since the formation of 'Juntas of Good Government'.

However, the war is not over as EZLN recruitment and guerilla warfare training continues. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor report for 2004 highlights instances

defence services (e.g. missiles, rockets, torpedoes, bombs, mines and tanks) amounted to \$112million and \$436million, respectively, in 2003. The US military also spent \$1.25million on training the Mexican Army in 2003. The US training programmes are officially for counter-narcotic operations, however the Mexican Army have been observed using techniques learnt from the US military against the EZLN in Chiapas.

From the initial uprising the EZLN has publicised their struggle using the printed media and the internet. The writings of Subcommandante Marcos are available in many different editions and languages. The Chiapas conflict has become a celebrated cause for many activists across the world and has, in part,

been shaped by the involvement of activists. The Mexican Army's ceasefire has been attributed to the protests in Mexico's urban centres far away from the Chiapas. The presence of peace observers mostly drawn from

Zapatista support groups in the USA and Europe, as well as Mexico itself, is thought to have prevented excessive violence and intimidation by the Mexican army in Chiapas.

So well-known across the world is the name and image of the Zapatista that co-operatives in the Zapatista communities are producing and marketing their own brand of coffee which is distributed in Europe through various ethical shopping outlets. In 1994 *The Independent* (1 March) reported that Zapatista t-shirts, dolls and even condoms bearing an image of Marcos and the word 'uprising' have been marketed. In 2001, workers of a trendy clothing shop in Covent Garden selling Zapatista-inspired merchandise spray-painted Zapatista imagery and slogans on walls around major shopping areas in central London as well as dressing up as Zapatista guerrillas to hand out advertising material.

For socialists there are several encouraging things about the Zapatista movement: their apparent reliance on direct democracy and the solidarity shown to them by workers across the world. However, it is clear that the Zapatistas think their rallying cry of 'democracy, liberty and justice' can be fulfilled whilst the greatest amount of wealth, all it commands, and that we all depend upon remains in the hands of a minority.

So are we all Zapatistas? The workers and peasants of Chiapas have experienced some of the worst poverty and violence that humans have inflicted on each other. Workers across the world experience poverty and violence to some extent on a daily basis - it is the common bond that transcends national boundaries. This feature of our class-based society, an inevitable result of the social relation of worker to capital, has never been abolished by national liberation, state capitalism or 'good' government. The Zapatistas' desire for real democracy is commendable, however, this should not be limited to defence of perceived or actual gains within capitalist society but for the abolition of capitalism and establishment of world socialism. ■

PIERS HOBSON

"US involvement in the Chiapas rebellion is of no surprise given the fact that Mexico has the third-largest proven crude oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere"

of state and local police involvement in kidnappings and extortion, torture, unlawful killings, narcotics-related crime and the trafficking of illegal migrants in Chiapas. The report also states that there were numerous allegations of the use of excessive force and the violation of international humanitarian law against the Mexican Army



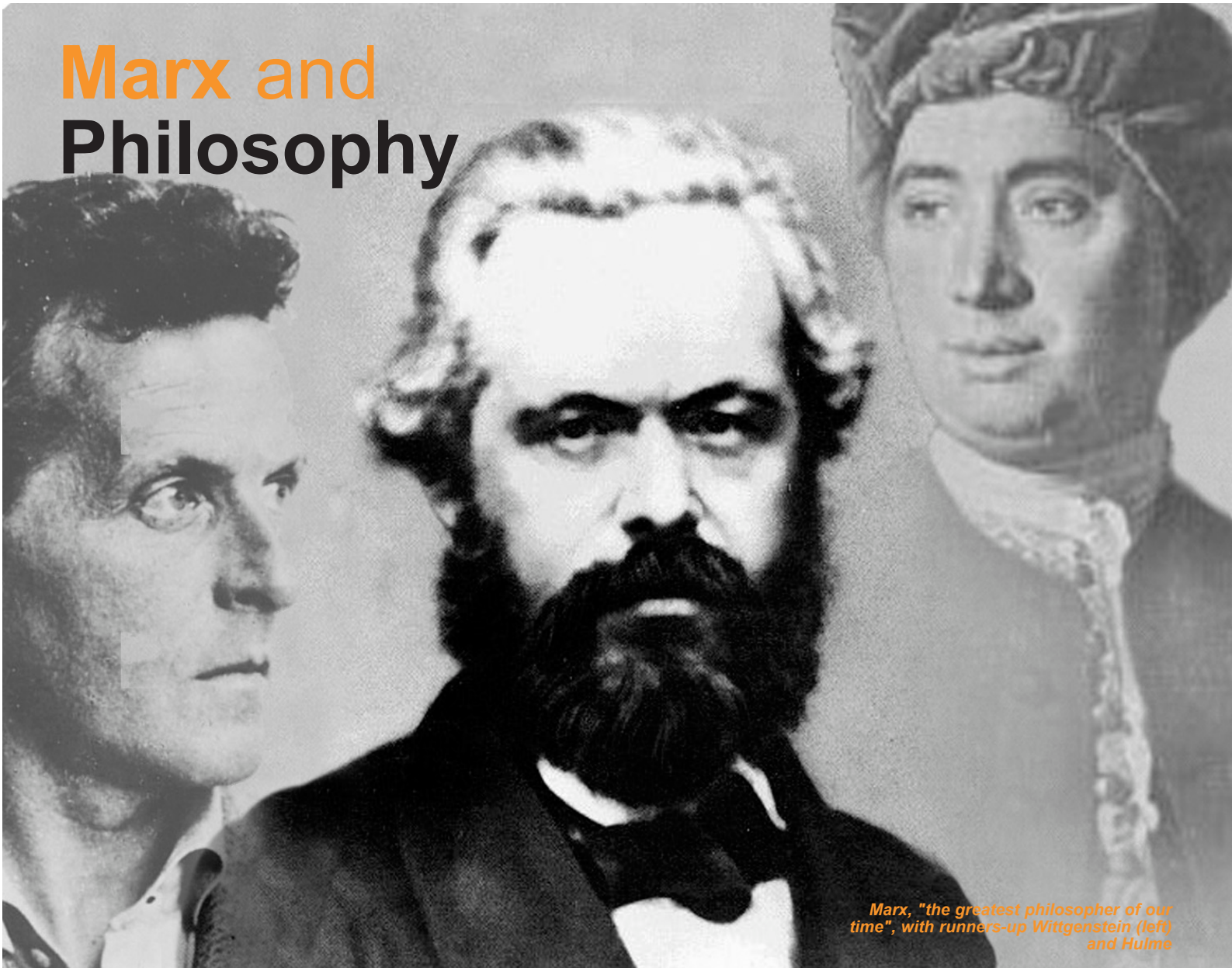
A Zapatista member at a recent rally

as well as continued violence by paramilitary groups.

There is also US involvement in the Chiapas rebellion which is perhaps of no surprise given the proximity and the fact that Mexico has the third-largest proven crude oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere and is the third-largest foreign supplier of petroleum to the United States, behind Canada and Saudi Arabia. PEMEX, the state-owned oil corporation, is a vital source of revenue for the Mexican state which is heavily indebted to the banks in the USA. Oil fields with one billion barrel potential have recently been discovered in Chiapas.

According to the Federation of American Scientists' Arms Sales Monitoring Project direct commercial sales of defence articles (e.g. machine guns, rifles, pistols, grenade launchers and ammunition) and

Marx and Philosophy



Marx, "the greatest philosopher of our time", with runners-up Wittgenstein (left) and Hume

In July BBC Radio 4 announced the result of its poll of listeners to find the "the greatest philosopher of our time". And the winner was - Karl Marx, as the first past the post with 28 percent of the 34,000 or so votes cast, way ahead of the second, the 18th century Scottish sceptic and agnostic, David Hume, with 13 percent, and the early 20th century logical-positivist, Ludwig Wittgenstein, with 7 percent.

There must be some sort of significance to Marx being selected by some 9,500 people. It would be nice to think that it was a vote for Marx's aim of a society without private property in the means of production, without money, the wages system or the state. More likely it represented a recognition of his contribution to the analysis of history and capitalism.

What did Marx have to say about philosophy? In fact, was he really a philosopher? He was certainly a doctor of philosophy in the literal sense, having obtained his doctorate - the trade unionists who associated with him in the 1860s in the First International knew him as "Dr Marx" - for a thesis on two Ancient Greek philosophers, Democritus and Epicurus. And in his early and mid twenties he thought and wrote extensively about philosophical problems, but then he reached the conclusion that abstract philosophising about "God", "the nature of Man" and "the meaning of life", which nearly all

philosophers had speculated about till then, was a pretty useless exercise and he abandoned it, at the age of 27, never to return to it. This was in fact more or less the same conclusion as reached by the two runners-up in the BBC poll, Hume and Wittgenstein.

What such philosophy was replaced by, for Marx, was the empirical, i.e. scientific, study and analysis of history and society, what has come to be known as the materialist conception of history. Strictly speaking, this is not really a philosophy but a theory and methodology of a particular science. Engels has had to take some stick for introducing the term "scientific socialism" but it is an accurate description of the outcome of Marx's (and his own) encounter with the German philosophy of his day.

Marx had come to socialism via German philosophy. Like many other radical-minded Germans in the 1840s he had been a "Young Hegelian", the name given to those who interpreted Hegel's philosophy in a radical way to justify the establishment of a democratic and secular state in Germany. Hegel himself (who had died in 1831) was no radical democrat, even though he had initially welcomed the French Revolution. Quite the opposite. By the 1820s he was a conservative defender of the Prussian State, almost its State philosopher. And he believed that

Christianity was true, with all that that implies in terms of the existence of a god with a plan for humanity and which intervenes in human affairs.

What appealed to German radicals in Hegel's philosophy was the concept of alienation (of something from its nature, or essence) and the view that (until the end of history) all human institutions were transitory and developed through intellectual criticism bringing out and then transcending the contradictions in the idea behind them. For Hegel this was all in a religious context (alienation was the alienation of Man from God and the end of history was the reconciliation of Man with God). The Young Hegelians completely rejected this and were highly critical of religion; in fact they made a speciality of this, presenting a secularised version of Hegel's system in which alienation was still the alienation of Man (with a capital M) but from Man's true nature, and the end of history was the reconciliation of Man with this nature, or human emancipation as they called it.

Most of them identified this with the establishment of a democratic republic. So did Marx, to begin with, but he came to the conclusion that political democracy, though desirable as a step forward for Germany, did not amount to full human emancipation, but only to a partial, "political" emancipation; "human" emancipation could only be

achieved by a society without private property, money or the state. Looking for an agent to achieve this, Marx identified the "proletariat" but conceived of in very philosophical terms as a social group that was "the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general", "the complete loss of humanity and thus can only recover itself by a complete redemption of humanity". As he wrote at the end of his article "Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" published in February 1844: "The head of this emancipation [of Man] is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat." This is the same article in which occurs perhaps his most well-known saying "religion is the opium of the people", i.e., an illusory escape from real suffering. This was in fact aimed at his fellow Young Hegelians who seemed to imagine that religion could be made to disappear merely by criticising its irrationality. Marx's analysis of religion and of what was required to make it disappear went deeper:

"The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion. The criticism of religion is therefore the germ of the criticism of the valley of tears whose halo is religion".

And:

"The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man, that is, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised" (Translated by David McLellan in *Karl Marx: Early Texts*).

This is still a philosophical approach and it makes Marx, at this time, a humanist philosopher. Some find this enough, and eminently commendable (and Marx may even have got some votes in the BBC poll on this basis), and of course being a



Philosopher and defender of the Prussian State, Hegel

socialist has to rest in the end on wanting to "overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised".

Marx himself, however, was not satisfied to let the case for socialism rest on a mere philosophical theory that it provided the only social basis on which the "essence of Man" could be fully and finally realised. After continuing to initial with his previous philosophical position, he ended by rejecting the view that humans had any abstract "essence" from which they were alienated. As he put it in some notes jotted down in 1845:

"The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (*Theses on Feuerbach*).

This led him away from philosophical speculations about "human essence", what it was and how to realise it, to the study of the different "ensembles of social relations" within which humans had lived and to see history not as the development of any idea

but as the development from one "ensemble of social relations" to another in line with the development of the material forces of production. This gave socialism a much firmer basis than a simple "categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised". It made it the next stage in the development of human society, a stage which was both being prepared by the development of the current stage (capitalism) and the solution to the problems caused by capitalism's inherent internal contradictions. It kept the agent of its establishment as the class of wage workers, no longer considered as a class embodying all the sufferings of humanity, but as the class whose material interest would lead it to oppose and eventually abolish capitalism.

Marx still retained some of the language and concepts of his Young Hegelian past, but he gave them a new, materialist content. Thus, for instance, the alienation of the "proletariat" was no longer alienation from their human essence but alienation from the products of their own labour which came to dominate them in the form of capital as personified by a capitalist class; and "the emancipation of Man" became the emancipation of all humans through the abolition of classes and class rule by the world-wide working class pursuing its material interest; and he still referred to end of capitalism as the close of "the pre-history of human society". The imperative to change the world too remained, but addressed to the working class rather to philosophers. As he put it in 1845 in his parting shot at German philosophy: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (also from the *Theses on Feuerbach*). ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (2)

Access denied

In June the BBC offered free downloads of live Beethoven concerts broadcast on Radio 3. It was a huge success. But not everyone was pleased. *The Independent* (10

July) reported:

"The BBC has been lambasted by classical music labels for making all nine of Beethoven's symphonies available for free download over the Internet. This week the BBC will announce there have been more than a million downloads of the symphonies during the month-long scheme. But the initiative has infuriated the bosses of leading classical record companies who argue the offer undermines the value of music and that any further offers would be unfair competition."

Yes of course (but they must mean the price, not the value, of music). If something is available free, nobody's going to pay for it. That is the ultimate "unfair competition". But the real question is different: if something can be provided free at little or no extra cost, why isn't it?

The answer is that, under capitalism, the basic economic law is "no profit, no production". So, no private capitalist is going to invest in providing something free to people. What would be the point? There'd be no profit in it.

The only institution which could do this would be the state, using resources obtained through taxation from the private capitalist sector. In Britain the state does in fact provide a number of services that are free at the point and time of use: roads, schools, parts of the health service, for instance. But these are seen as services for the capitalist class as a whole and as not involving competition with capitalist businesses trying to make a profit out of supplying the same service. (Certainly, there are capitalist firms lobbying for the right to cherry-pick the profitable parts of these services but no capitalist is going to be interested in investing in side streets or in rural roads.)

If the state does venture to supply free a potentially profitable service - as the BBC did on this occasion - then the private sector squeals "unfair, subsidised competition". As the British state and the BBC are fully committed to capitalism and its logic, the BBC's director general, Mark Thompson, rushed to reassure the profit-seeking commercial suppliers of music

recordings:

"In a speech to the British Phonographic Industry, the trade association for the recording industry, Mr Thompson tried to allay fears from the commercial sector. The anxiety, he said, 'boils down to two questions: is this the start of some new regular service from the BBC, in which, without warning and consultation, the public will be offered chunks of music free at the point of download which will inevitably distort the commercial market in music? And second, are there any limits to what the BBC might download? Could we wake up one morning to discover that half the BBC's musical archive is available on the net? The answer to these two questions is: no and no.'" (*Guardian*, 21 July).

But that precisely is what could well happen in socialism. Not just half the BBC's musical archives but the whole of them, as well as all other musical archives, could be made available for people to download freely. And why not? Let those against the provision of free music - and free telephones, free electricity, free transport, etc, for that matter - put up a case for restricting access to what people need and want when the resources to do this exist. If they can.

The British Communist Left by Mark Hayes (International Communist Current, 2005) £5.00

This is a history of the so-called 'Communist Left' in British politics from 1914-1945, published by one of the main, contemporary organisations of this tradition and written by one of their sympathisers.

It is a largely accurate account of those identified with the left-wing of Bolshevik politics in this era, a political tendency chastised by Lenin in his famous 'Left-wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder'. Over a long period this tendency gradually struggled towards taking up socialist positions on the nature of the future society, reformism, the state capitalist nature of Russia, China, etc while also developing a virulent hostility to 'bourgeois democracy' and trade unionism. As this pamphlet unwittingly shows, it was a political current which made some serious errors during its political evolution too - and continues to do so, largely because of its adherence to the vanguard politics of Leninism.

The left communists in Britain were small in both number and influence compared to their counterparts in continental Europe, specifically the German, Dutch and Italian lefts. While elements in the Socialist Labour Party and British Socialist Party held views associated with left communism for a short time after the Bolshevik takeover, the most significant left communist organisation in Britain emerged out of the radical suffragette movement led by Sylvia Pankhurst during the First World War and was grouped around the paper *Women's Dreadnought*, which by 1917 had been renamed the *Workers' Dreadnought*.

This became the paper of the Workers' Socialist Federation, a group dominated by Pankhurst and with support drawn from political activists mainly in the East End of London. The WSF never numbered more than about three hundred members at the very most and, after eventually being subsumed within the Communist Party of Great Britain in January 1921, vanished as a group or faction by 1924. Pankhurst had been expelled from the CPGB within a year for her criticism of the official Party line, before moving on to other, more eclectic (and openly reformist) causes. Although Mark Hayes doesn't mention it, what is clear from this and every other related study is that while it would be an exaggeration to say that the *Workers' Dreadnought* group was a one woman show, it would not be that much of an exaggeration. When Pankhurst moved on, the group collapsed and the paper - always owned and largely financed by Pankhurst herself - ceased publication.

Small organisations around the idiosyncratic Glasgow anarchist Guy Aldred such as the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation also came and went in this period, veering between left communism and anarchism, but none of them amounted to much. And that in essence is it: left communism in Britain until its re-appearance with the ICC itself and one or two other tiny groups in the 1970s.

After interesting beginnings, the ICC has mutated into an organisation regarded by virtually all other political groups (including those on the communist left previously well-

disposed towards it) as a paranoid sect, and its treatment of the SPGB here is an interesting one, not least because we are the one workers' political organisation discussed still in existence and thereby the most obvious target for its spleen.

The key 'class frontier' for the ICC and other left communist groups is whether a political organisation takes sides in a capitalist war or not. Yet, despite our impeccable record of actively opposing both world wars and all other wars too, this book gives the SPGB short shrift. It claims, "in practice" that in 1939, just as supposedly in 1914, "the SPGB made no attempt to oppose the war" (p.101). What it means by this is that we did not raise the ICC's suicidal slogan of 'turn the imperialist war into a world wide civil war against capitalism'.

The *Socialist Standard* is criticised for not publishing openly anti-war articles for part of the Second World War because of the strict Defence Regulations relating to seditious printed matter which caused the suppression of the *Daily Worker*, but no mention is made of the Party's open anti-war propaganda by other means or the way in which the SPGB sought to prevent mere pacifist opponents of the war from becoming members. Presumably never having been sent to prison himself for his political beliefs, Mark Hayes also sneers at the SPGB members who applied during the world wars to be conscientious objectors, scores of whom were imprisoned by the British state for refusing to kill their fellow workers.

Quite why the ICC thinks that a few hundred political activists starting a civil war against the might of the capitalist state is a sensible socialist tactic is anyone's guess. The SPGB members who successfully applied to be conscientious objectors or went 'on the run' were at least able to work for socialism and keep the organisation alive, whereas if the ICC was ever crazy enough to put its own tactic into operation it would soon cease to exist organisationally. That the ICC is not really serious about this type of abstract sectarianism though can be seen by the fact that "in practice" (to use its own phrase) there has not been one single occasion when any of its sections across the world has ever tried to do anything other than when faced with a war than what the SPGB did in 1914 or 1939, i.e. denounce it as a capitalist conflict not worth the shedding of a drop of blood.

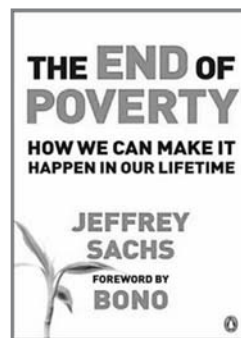
The ICC do exist in something of an unusual - not to say unique - political bubble, as this book repeatedly demonstrates. While the SPGB is lambasted for its insufficient opposition to wars and for betraying the future moneyless commonwealth by opposing the misguided tactics of the Bolsheviks (at least until the early 1920s when the ICC retrospectively thinks this became respectable), the Trotskyists - who then as now took sides in 'national liberation' struggles and wars, were reformist, advocated state capitalism, supported the Labour Party, etc - are regarded with some affection, until they finally 'betrayed' the working class by taking sides in World War Two. For sheer illogicality and inconsistency there can be little to beat this.

When it is filtered for its Leninism and sectarianism, the *British Communist Left* is not all bad as it is a useful historical account in parts. While it is a short book it is nevertheless a bit of a trying read, best characterised as a largely academic piece infused with heavy doses of the ICC's

somewhat tiresome political liturgy. If page after page of references to 'centrism', 'opportunistic currents', the 'proletarian terrain' and 'ambiguous swamps' are your thing then go out and buy it immediately. It's not too unkind to say you are unlikely to be killed in the rush.

DAP

Jeffrey Sachs: The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen in Our Lifetime. Penguin £7.99.



There are various things wrong with this book, the first being the title. Sachs (described on the back cover as 'probably the most important economist in the world') is not concerned with doing away with sink estates where

children do not get one square meal a day, let alone three, or the culture of pawn shops and loan sharks (which would be classified as relative poverty). Instead he is writing about eliminating absolute or extreme poverty, where households cannot meet basic needs: people are chronically hungry, have no access to health care or safe water, and may lack rudimentary shelter. In 2001, around 1.1 billion of the earth's population were in extreme poverty. Sachs neatly places things in perspective:

"Almost three thousand people died needlessly and tragically at the World Trade Center on September 11; ten thousand Africans die needlessly and tragically every single day - and have died every single day since September 11 - of AIDS, TB, and malaria."

But even if his proposals were implemented and proved successful, there would still be plenty of poverty in the world.

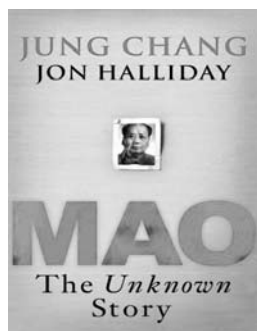
Ending extreme poverty would of course be very worthwhile, but can capitalism achieve this? Sachs claims that the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen from 1.5 billion since 1981 (largely due to developments in China). Surely, however, we are entitled to be a little sceptical about such claims: they are based on World Bank estimates, and ignore the extent of poverty still found in China, especially in the countryside. He acknowledges, though, that the extreme poor in Africa have more than doubled in the twenty years to 2001, now being over 300 million, which is a rise even in percentage terms. Yet, he argues, extreme poverty can be got rid of by 2025: the key is 'to enable the poorest of the poor to get their foot on the ladder of development.' The way to kick-start things is by comparatively modest amounts of overseas aid, which will mean that households can save more and so increase the amount of seeds and agricultural equipment they have access to and will also allow governments to build roads, sanitation systems and so on; this will snowball and lead on to further development. The first few chapters of the book imply that Sachs has some kind of economic magic wand that he can wave over countries from Bolivia to

India, delivering prosperity.

However, his proposals for 'ending poverty' are effectively put forward in a vacuum, unencumbered by the existence of a world dominated by one super-powerful nation, a small number of super-powerful companies, and a tiny minority of super-rich capitalists. Sachs accepts that exploitation of poor countries by the rich has happened in the past, but believes that it no longer applies. He also accepts, though without making it explicit of course, a division of the world into owners of the means of production and non-owners. Doing away with this would mean an immediate end to all kinds of poverty - extreme, moderate and relative - without having to wait another twenty years and rely on yet more empty promises.

PB

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday: Mao: the Untold Story. Jonathon Cape £25.



Overtuning a paragraph of conventional history can be the basis for an entire thesis, if not an entire professional reputation. Chang and Halliday have set out to re-write every paragraph of the story of Mao Zedong.

The authors attack the established canon of Mao biography; and their clear, unrelenting hostility may house the book's greatest weakness. Much of their re-interpretation depends upon assessments of Mao's character, and his internal states when he made vital decisions. For example, they maintain that Mao deliberately meandered along the Long March (a period of retreat by the Red Army from the nationalists) in order to strengthen his grip on the party before they met up with the rest of the army.

Repeatedly they make reference to what Mao was thinking, which, without written sources, is impossible to determine. Most historians and biographers would hedge and say 'maybe' or 'probably' he thought something.

Such potential weakness, although they may allow latter-day Maoist wingnuts to deflect debate away from the issues raised, aren't fatal. The book describes in aching detail the horrors of Mao's regime, facts established by witnesses and irrefutable evidence. This is largely because, unlike Hitler or Stalin, Mao's preference was not for disappearances and quiet murder, but for public witch-hunts - mobilised terror in which anyone refusing to wholeheartedly join in would find themselves a target. He repeatedly used this strategy throughout his career to gain and hold power, culminating in the infamous Cultural Revolution, which accounted for some 100 million people being humiliated, tortured, maimed and, in 3 million instances, murdered.

His callousness is almost beyond the scope of human imagining. In one year, 22 million people died of starvation - brought about primarily through Mao's disastrous project to make China - then one of the



Jung Chang

poorest countries on Earth - into a nuclear super-power. The famines and overwork induced by the programme led to 38 million deaths. The authors maintain Mao was essentially apolitical: merely egotistic and power hungry. They reject claims that he cared about peasants - producing a quote in which he maintains that the lot of students (like himself) was worse than that of the peasants. They suggest his choice of the communist party over the nationalists (for a time the two parties were united) was simply down to a predilection for violence.

He had many homes built for himself - at great expense - which he would only set foot in once - if ever. While people starved he would gorge himself on whole chickens and huge quantities of meat and fish. Around him, millions of Chinese had less food than labourers in Auschwitz.

His reputation for supporting feminism also takes a battering in this book, as the authors reveal how he used women almost as imperial concubines, procured from the local labour force. Anyone who objected to his and other leaders' privileges amongst squalor were derided as "petit-bourgeois egalitarians".

Chang and Halliday even attempt to overturn the central story of the Mao myth - the war of national liberation against Japan. Even very recent writers hedge criticisms of Mao by mention of the vicissitudes of that war. However, this book alleges that the Reds under Mao were more concentrated on fighting the nationalist government than the Japanese.

Further, they try to show that on the Long March, Mao and the other leaders didn't march with their soldiers: they were carried; that the leader of the nationalists, Chiang Kai-Shek allowed the Red Army to escape because his son was being held hostage by Stalin; and that some of Mao's major victories may have been assisted by the treachery of the nationalist general who repeatedly allowed troops to walk into horrific ambushes.

The narrative makes out that Mao never commanded much support with either the Chinese communist party or the population. His ascent was largely down to the backing of Russian communist officials who never met him.

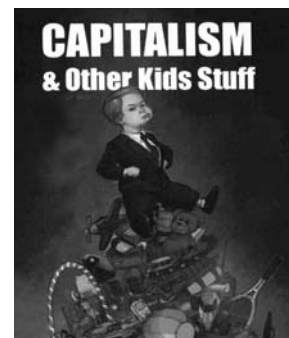
This book is unlikely to be the last word on the matter, but it is a forceful reappraisal of a figure who would be the equivalent of a George Washington for the emerging Chinese superpower. This is the story of what happened when a ruthless tyrant tried to rule a quarter of the human race.

The only positive message is that ultimately, his terror proved futile, as he increasingly found himself having to horse trade policies to stay in power against his rivals - leaders are prisoners of their followers. The terror of Mao's rule could well be seen as the impotent rage of a tyrant.

PS

Film Review

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff



To describe a society of common ownership without mentioning the word socialism is undoubtedly difficult. But by no means impossible. For a short film produced by members of the

Socialist Party, *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff*, does just that in a language that nevertheless consistently pulls no punches.

Socialists are well aware of the dual purpose on the part of the capitalist media in portraying the class of exploited producers as a mindless, selfish, non-caring mass of individual consumers: to promote profits and create disunity. The film destroys these caricatures right from the start and exposes them for the claptrap they are, by juxtaposing the individual differences of perception with the broad facts of social evolution, human behaviour, and the unique ability of humans to care and share in common despite our cultural differences and lifestyles.

When the producing class engage in widespread discrimination over issues of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, disability, etc; and take sides over who gets what share of the global market, this is clearly against their interests since they are thereby helping to create the conditions for a wealthy few to control the means of living.

Globally the results are all too familiar with the complexity of private property relationships concealed within a quagmire of disputes over territory and markets, followed by constant eruptions of violent conflict, and ending in misery and destitution on a massive scale. By skilfully crafting the reasons for this complexity of private property relationships to a novel 'kids stuff' analogy the script neatly underlines the importance of gaining a worldview of capitalism by analysing how the rules governing the minority ownership of the 'toys' determines the terms of oppression and the conditions of inequality for the 'toyless producers'.

Although there is an obvious danger such an analogy could be counter-productive, by unintentionally projecting an oversimplification of what constitutes the reality of capitalism, this hurdle is overcome by complementing the linkage to the "reality" of capitalism with a powerful backdrop of words and images, so the overall context underscores a revolutionary outlook on how we might live. These contrasts are further enhanced by comparing the divisions and horrors of capitalism with a society where production is geared to meeting human needs not profit - plus the immense benefits to be gained when the world's resources are distributed through a system of production for use and free access - so the necessity of social equality become conclusive.

This is maintained throughout the 50 minutes so the viewer is left in no doubt that

before a world of common ownership is possible the majority have to gain a level of class consciousness and political understanding. In other words: engaging in a struggle to promote the class interest of the majority to attain and create a society where private property is replaced by common ownership involves acknowledging that the present unequal access to the means of living requires a political solution.

To get this solution across to an apolitical audience successfully in itself is no mean feat, but to also focus attention on the vast amount of social and individual freedom such a revolution will bring about will motivate many viewers to press the replay button over and over again, and so speaks volumes for the professional dedication and attention to detail. Although this is a first in terms of the socialist message being transposed into a film format no doubt it will not be the last. So watch this space, but in the meantime judge for yourself by watching *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff* at www.socialist-tv.com, or alternatively by purchasing a DVD from: Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Cost £5 (including post & packaging).

Brian Johnson

from page 5

best to stop the sale of bogus 'official' kit, so the Olympic 'movement' says that only companies who stomp up the money to them can gain any kudos from the magic O-word and the five rings.

Naturally money has long been talking the Olympic language with regard to the 2008 games in Beijing. Three levels of corporate involvement are envisaged, including partners (cost \$40 million), and sponsors (over \$20 million). Budweiser, for instance, is the official international beer sponsor, giving its owners Anheuser-Busch the right to use the 2008 games logo for promotional purposes in China and many other countries. And it's not just a matter of getting money in for 2008. In the words of one marketing expert, 'The Beijing Olympics will not be about sport, it will be about creating a superbrand called "China"' (<http://www.chinabusinessreview.com/public/0501/ogilvy.html>). So as China flexes its muscles in terms of currency revaluations and provides financial support for Mugabe's thuggish regime in Zimbabwe, it also competes in staging the Olympic free-for-all and marketing itself within world capitalism. ■

PB

Meetings

Manchester Branch Meeting

Monday 26 September, 8 pm
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre
'FEEDING THE WORLD'

West London Branch

Tuesday 20 September, 8 pm

Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W.4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Showing of video **ARE YOU IN A BAD STATE?**

Fifty Years Ago

TALKS AT THE SUMMIT

The snows of the Cold war are melting. The Soviet Premier, Bulganin, and the Communist Party leader, Krushchev, are to visit Britain next spring. They will be feted by the Queen. Even the *Daily Mail* welcomes the visit - with some reservations.

During the war the Russians were our friends, our "gallant allies," our "comrades in arms." But since 1945 they have become the villains of the piece. They have become our potential enemies. Whilst our old enemies the Italians, the Japanese and the Germans (the Western Germans, of course!) are now our friends, our allies in a possible future war. But now, since the Geneva "Talks at the Summit" the Russians - for how long we know not - are almost our

friends again; or at least our politicians have "agreed" to differ with the Soviet rulers.

To most people, who think that all these differences and antagonisms are due to differences of systems or ideologies - to "Communism" or "Fascism" - these changes are quite bewildering.

(. . .) [T]he reasons why the rulers of Russia, America, or Britain fall out is not any so-called difference of ideologies, of Democracy, or Communism; or differences of social systems or ways of life. For we know that their social systems are not basically different; that American "free enterprise" is not fundamentally different from Soviet "Communism." We know that in Britain, America - and the U.S.S.R. the same problems exist; we know that the workers of these lands are poor, that they live insecure lives, whilst

their employers are rich; we know that in the Soviet Union, as Stalin admitted just before he died, the ruling class is being forced more and more to look for markets for its goods - outside its own frontiers. We know that the Soviet leaders are as much concerned with protecting their property interests as are the Americans or British. That is why we are not surprised at the antagonisms the Cold War, the changing alliances, the "Talks at the Summit," and the temporary patching-up of differences.

(From an article by Peter E. Newell, *Socialist Standard*, September 1955)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Paul Foot and the vote

Paul Foot who died last year was always a readable journalist. He was also a member of the Trotskyist SWP. When he died he was working on a book about the

vote, a curious subject, it might be thought, for the political testament of a member of an organisation which favours armed insurrection and mass strikes rather than the vote as the way to gain control of political power. Called *The Vote, How it was Won and How it was Undermined*, it is basically about the tension between Democracy (as universal suffrage) and Property (as accumulated wealth).

During the English civil war a famous debate, presided over by Cromwell, took place in the church at Putney, in London, where the issue was thrashed out amongst representatives of all ranks in the parliamentary army, of the ordinary soldiers as well as of the officers and the high command. Soldiers who were Levellers argued that the vote should be given to every man (or at least to every man who was not a servant or on the Poor Law; there was some ambiguity on this point). They were opposed by Commissary-General Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, who argued that only those who had a real stake in the country by virtue of being owners of land should have the right to vote, i.e. to decide what laws were made, what taxes were levied, etc. It fell to an officer with the appropriate name of Colonel Rich to spell out what might happen if men with little or no property were given the vote:

"It may happen, that the majority may by law, not in confusion, destroy property; there may be a law enacted, that there shall be equality of goods and estate".

This remained the standard argument against democracy until the end of the 19th century. Both Gladstone and Disraeli were declared opponents of democracy, and in fact in Europe democracy was seen, by both its opponents and supporters as a

some, in fact most, of this work would have to be done by persons who were neither aristocrats nor capitalists. The working class had to be got involved in the administration of capitalism. To do this they had to be brought "within the constitution" by being given full citizenship rights, as represented by having the vote. The more far-seeing of the supporters of capitalism realised this; some actively campaigned for it even in Chartist times. The bourgeois-democratic republic (or constitutional monarchy) is in fact the ideal political form for the rule of the capitalist class.

However, just because universal suffrage and formal democratic control of the machinery of government was in the overall interest of the capitalist class as a whole didn't mean that this was going to come about automatically. As Foot points out, it had to be struggled for. Both the First Reform Act of 1832 (which extended the franchise to the "middle class") and the Second Reform Act (which extended it to most urban workers) were accompanied by riots and demonstrations by workers that persuaded the House of Lords not to use its veto. In between, as Foot recounts, the Chartists demonstrated and rioted and even staged some armed uprisings to try to achieve universal male suffrage, unsuccessfully as it turned out, but with the aim of transferring political power to the working class.

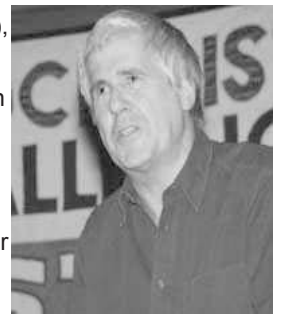
When it comes to the second part of the book ("how the vote was undermined"), Foot seems to be suggesting that Labour failed because its leaders, when in government, weren't determined enough in their use of parliament to bring about, in the words of the Labour Party's manifesto for the 1974 general election manifesto, "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power in favour of working people and their families" (yes, believe it or not, that what's they actually were promising as recently as that). This, despite the fact that his own descriptions of what happened to the various Labour governments - "bankers' ramp" in 1931, "sterling crises" in 1947 and 1949, "gnomes of Zurich" for Wilson in the 1960s, and "IMF conditions" for Callaghan in the 1970s - bring out the fact that capitalism is a world system and that no government of one country, however determined, can isolate the economy from the workings and pressures of the world market.

It might be thought that Foot as a Trotskyist (he was in the SWP) would have realised that "socialism in one country" is impossible. But, although Trotsky did proclaim this, it didn't mean that he thought nothing could be done in one country; if a vanguard was ruthless and determined enough it could, he argued, establish a "Workers State", based on nationalisation and planning, i.e. that "state capitalism in one country" was possible.

It is what had happened in Russia and Foot gives the impression that the Labour Party could have done the same in Britain if only its leaders had been prepared to stand up to the gnomes of Zurich and other international capitalists. Actually, as a Trotskyist, Foot doesn't believe this, as it is the Trotskyist view that the sort of full-scale state capitalism that Foot thinks the Labour Party should have been bold enough to have pressed on towards can only be established after a successful armed insurrection led by a Trotskyist vanguard ("There is no parliamentary road", says "What the SWP Stands For"). It is thus rather odd that Foot should have chosen to write a book about *The Vote* at all since for him the vote is only of relatively minor significance, serving merely as a potential means of access to a tribunal from which to spread Trotskyist views ("At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system").

This is quite a different perspective to that of the more clear-sighted Chartists - and Marx who was influenced by them - that universal suffrage, once achieved, could be used as a means of winning control of political power so that, in the words of Colonel Rich in 1647, "the majority may by law, not in confusion, destroy property". ■

ALB



Voting with its Foot - the SWP never had much time for democracy

Chartist meeting, Kennington, 1848

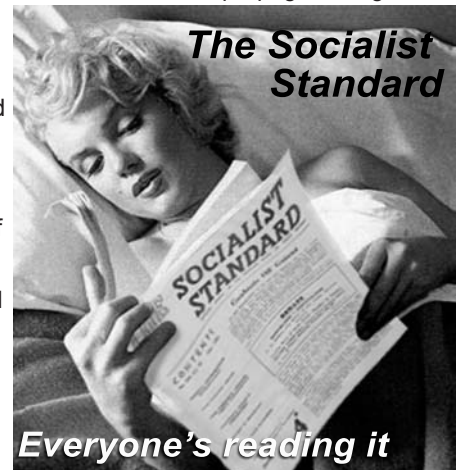


revolutionary demand. Marx himself hoped that, with the universal male suffrage that the Chartists demanded, what Colonel Rich had feared would come about. "Universal suffrage is the equivalent of political power for the working class of England", he wrote in August 1852 in an article in the New York Tribune quoted by Foot. "Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class".

After the Second and Third Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, the majority of electors in Britain came from the working class, even though only about 30 percent of the adult population had the vote (no women and only 60 percent of men). This remained the situation until after the first world war, when the vote was extended to men over 21 and women over 30. Universal suffrage did not come until 1928 when the vote was given to women too at 21.

The extension of the vote did partially realise Colonel Rich's fear and Karl Marx's hope in that it did lead to the formation and rise of the Labour Party as a "working class party" with as one of its aims a redistribution of wealth from the rich to the working class. But this didn't happen. The second part of Foot's book is devoted to explaining why Democracy did not lead to any significant inroads into the rights of Property, in other words, why Labour failed.

One thing he had neglected in his account of "how the vote was won" was the extent to which an extension of the vote increasingly became a necessity as capitalism developed and as the administrative work of the capitalist state, at local as well as national level, grew and became more complex. It was clear that



Everyone's reading it



Keep It In The Family

The Make Poverty History movement has been taken seriously by at least one member of the African capitalist class.

"Most of his country's citizens survive on less than 60p a day, but that has not stopped the son of the President of Equatorial Guinea spending nearly £1 million on three luxury cars during a massive shopping spree in South Africa.

Teodorin Nguema Obiang, the Minister of Forestry, Environment and Housing in his Father's Government, bought a black Bentley Arnage and a cream Bentley Mulliner worth £600,000 last weekend.

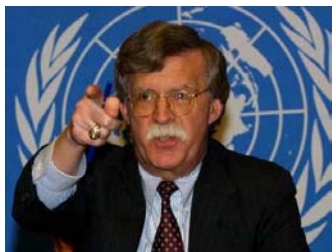


Bentley Arnage interior, just so you know

He then added a white six-litre Lamborghini worth £275,000 to his new fleet, according to The Star newspaper." The Times (21 July). Mr Obiang's family have made poverty history - for their family at any rate. But what about the working class in that country - 60p a day? We might earn about £60 a day but the capitalist class in Britain enjoy the same class differences. How many of you spend a million pounds on a shopping spree?

An Honest Ambassador

President Bush took the unprecedented step of appointing the US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton during a recess of the US Senate. He deemed this necessary because of an opposition easy to understand when you consider Bolton's



Rambo Bolton telling it like it is

contempt for the UN. "In 1994, during a convention in New York, Mr Bolton declared: 'There is no such thing as

the United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that's the United States, when it suits our interests and who can get others to go along.'" He also said:

"The only question for the United States is what's in our interest. And if you don't like that, I'm sorry, but that is a fact." The Times (2 August)

There is nothing remarkable about this. It correctly sums up the US position in world politics, but what the Senate object to is the honesty with which they are expressed. Politicians are never fond of honesty, it sets a dangerous precedent!

Wage Slaves

A common objection to socialism is that people are too lazy and

wouldn't work thus making socialism impossible. This "lazy man" objection to a new society doesn't seem to square with the findings of a report prepared by the office supplier Esselte. "Nearly a third of British wage slaves work more than 50 hours a week; 4 per cent more than 70 hours; and more than a third take work home according to a survey of 2,611 people." The Times (4 August)

Good News From Uganda

Amidst all the despair about world poverty we have managed to discover from the letter page of an African newspaper some good news. "About two thirds of the world's population are hungry, while millions die from starvation every year. Why in a world of potential plenty, is so elementary a human need as food neglected? ... The law that governs everywhere is "no profit, no production". Uganda Observer (4 August) Yes, even in so-called backward Africa, workers are learning that capitalism causes poverty.

A Bleak Future

Despite the well-meaning activities of the Make Poverty History campaign and various promises from G8 the future looks grim for the poor in Africa. "The proportion of malnourished people in sub-Sahara

Africa has remained at about 35% since 1970, the International Food Policy Research Institute said. But population growth means the number affected rose to 200 million by 2001. ... It warns that the number of malnourished children could grow from 38.6 million now to 41.9 million by 2025." BBC News (12 August) Well meaning charities are not the answer to this horrendous social problem. As the socialist letter writer to the Uganda Observer noted "the law that governs everywhere is no profit no production".

What is your view?

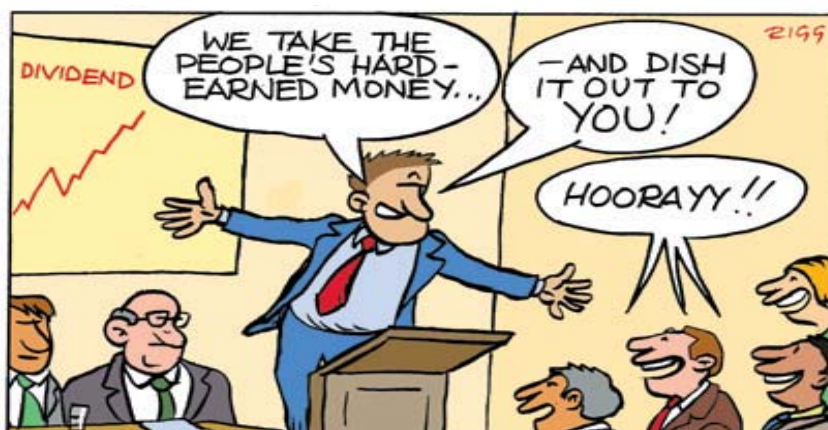
We are socialists and obviously we detest a society where people are forced to lie and cheat in order to survive, but what about successful liars and cheaters who have done well inside capitalism? Here is the PR Guru Max Clifford who has made millions lying and cheating. "Do I say, No, my client isn't gay when I know that he is? Of course. Does telling the truth matter? If it's showbiz...rock'n'roll ... then absolutely not." The Times (16 August) It isn't just show business though, here is Sir Harvey Jones a former chief executive of ICI commenting on modern capitalism - "Business is getting more corrupt. It is less a calling, less a profession. The stock market ... has purely become a gambling den. The Times (15 August) These people have benefited from capitalism and yet can see how corrupt it is. You haven't benefited at all, so why do you support it?



see page 17 for details

Free lunch

by Rigg



ISSN 0037 8259

Produced and published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN